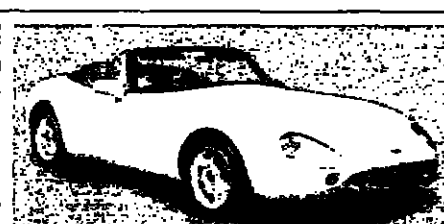




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RE AND REACHES
BREAKING POINT
Why the Church will lose
from the divorce vote



WIN A TV
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See Sec... page 4

New pressure for public inquiry 1,000 clues to the Wests' other victims

WILL BENNETT
and COLIN BROWN

Detectives in the Cromwell Street murder inquiry are following several new leads after their appeal for information on nine missing women known to have visited Frederick and Rosemary Wests' home.

But police yesterday stressed that there was no evidence that the women had come to any harm and said that they had no plans to start fresh searches for human remains. Police still have more than 1,000 incomplete lines of inquiry to check and a decision is to be made about which to follow up.

As controversy grew over the alleged failure by Gloucestershire police, health and social services departments to spot warning signs of abuse and murder in Cromwell Street, government ministers sought to avoid becoming embroiled in the row.

Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, last night resisted pressure from his own backbenchers for a public inquiry. Ministers are adamant that the system has been improved since the Maria Colwell inquiry in 1974, and that it ensured that police inform social services departments of child abuse suspects.

Tory backbencher Emma Nicholson argued yesterday that Government claims that children had adequate protection were not true. "Today's children are not protected. I am in utter despair at the exposure of professional incompetence and of the inadequacy of systems. I am appalled by the failure of the services to look after those children. All they are saying is that it is all too difficult and it was a long time ago. It is absolutely desperate. I feel so strongly I can't bear it."

Miss Nicholson demanded the resignation of "those in authority" in the case and called

for a Royal Commission "to look at the whole way we protect vulnerable children".



Emma Nicholson: demand for Royal Commission

conduct a review of the law on payments to witnesses with the Lord Chancellor and the Home Office, said the payments were like a form of Russian roulette and had threatened to blow proceedings out of the water.

"Are we running a criminal justice system as an entertainment business, or something the public has confidence in and which will deliver justice?" said Sir Nicholas.

There was confusion over the position of the Press Complaints Commission following claims that Lord McGregor, its former chairman, had told a tabloid editor that he would not be in breach of the code of conduct for newspapers by paying a witness for a story because the rules were so ambiguous.

A leading social services of-

ficial said last night that there was no guarantee that there could not be another case like the West catalogue of murder and abuse.

"No one with any sense can give an absolute guarantee that it couldn't happen again," said John Ransford, honorary secretary of the Association of Directors of Social Services. "But we can, with a degree of certainty... it is extremely unlikely that a situation like that would build up and the signs not be picked up."

But while the child abuse system was much improved, there remained considerable difficulties about helping runaways - such as those who fell victim to the Wests. "As youngsters of 16, 17 and 18 come up to adulthood they have rights as citizens to control their lives to a growing extent, and to disappear if they want to. And if they want to disappear, it is a relatively easy thing to do," he said.

Douglas French, Tory MP for Gloucester, repeated his call for a public inquiry and condemned the official report into social services departments involved in the West case by the Bridge consultancy as "woefully inadequate". He said: "What they have done is to look at hundreds of documents but they have not spoken to people at all."

Detective Superintendent John Bennett, head of the murder investigation, said the police had received 24 phone calls from the public since Rosemary West's conviction on 10 murder charges. Half of these provided information about some of the nine missing women who all visited Cromwell Street at some time during the last twenty years. One of the calls related to Marilyn, a woman who lived in Gloucester in the early 1970s. The remaining 12 callers had given police "positive lines of inquiry that they can follow", said Det Supt Bennett.

Club of the damned, Safeguards hope, pages 2,3



Former Barings trader Nick Leeson is led away by officers from Singapore's Commercial Affairs Department after his extradition from Frankfurt. He faces 11 fraud and forgery charges. Report, page 10 Photograph: Simon Thong

Power takeover binge stemmed

MARY FAGAN
and PETER RODGERS

The Government yesterday called a halt to a £14bn takeover binge in the electricity industry by referring two of the biggest bids to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, surprised the City by refusing to approve a £2.8bn bid by National Power, a privatised electricity generator, for Southern Electric, a local distribution company. He also referred a £1.95bn bid by PowerGen, another generator, for Midlands Electricity.

But there were fears in the industry that by stopping the bids Mr Lang could be opening the door to takeovers of Southern and Midlands by foreign firms that are known to be on the prowl for UK utilities.

However, this is the first time Mr Lang has acceded to widespread political, consumer and trade union demands for electricity bids to be scrutinised by the monopolies commission. The inquiries will take several months.

He has been accused by Labour of allowing the entire structure of the industry agreed at privatisation in 1990 to be

torn down and rebuilt without proper scrutiny.

Mr Lang and his predecessor, Michael Heseltine, have already cleared five other bids for privatised regional electricity companies, four of which have gone through.

But Mr Lang said he was referring the latest two bids because he was concerned about vertical integration between generators and distributors.

The National Consumer Council welcomed the referrals, saying domestic consumers in a captive market needed to be protected. "We are worried about the potential for abuse of

market power if the bids are allowed to go ahead and we want to be sure safeguards are put in place to protect the interests of consumers."

Unions expressed guarded relief but warned that Midlands and Southern must not be allowed to become vulnerable to takeovers by foreign companies.

Full report, page 24

New spy chief is named for MI5

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

An anti-terrorist expert and career civil servant is to head MI5 as the Security Service prepares to move into traditional policing for the first time.

The appointment of David Lander - the "in house" choice - is seen as an endorsement of the Security Service's recent policy of expanding its role into fighting organised crime and drug trafficking.

Mr Lander, 48, who is considered a "moderate and professional", will take over the £90,000-a-year job as director-general of MI5 from Stella Rimington next Easter.

He joined the service in 1975 and spent two years at MI6 before heading MI5's anti-terrorist squad and later becoming a director of corporate affairs.

His selection comes at a crucial moment of change for the Security Service, with its 2,000 staff and £150m budget. The Government is to bring in legislation to expand its role. It is currently restricted to protecting national security and the country's economic well-being.

Mr Lander is known to have been a keen supporter of the service's drive to work against organised crime. He will have to cope with increasing pressures to make MI5 more open and accountable. Last night, he said in a statement: "I am very pleased to have been invited to take the service forward at this time, building on the achievements under my predecessors."

Mr Lander, married with two children, was educated at Queen's College, Cambridge, and went on to take a PhD in history. Since joining MI5 in 1975, he has been responsible for monitoring Soviet spying activity in Britain and domestic subversion.

Downing Street also yesterday announced the appointment of another civil servant, David Omand, 48, to the job of heading the intelligence centre at Government Communication Headquarters in Cheltenham.

Howard vetoes European racism laws

SARAH HELM
Brussels

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, yesterday vetoed far-reaching proposals aimed at halting the rising tide of racist violence in Europe.

In a hot-tempered meeting in Brussels, Mr Howard accused other European Union members of "lecturing" Britain over the need for greater controls to ban racist demonstrations and racist literature. The Home Secretary's lone stand was enough to block the resolution, drawn up over several months

within the Council of Ministers, detailing measures to counter racism and xenophobia.

Britain argued that Europe had no right to insist on uniform controls, saying the measure could mean major legislative change, and the Home Office needed more time to consider the resolution. Mr Howard stands accused by Labour of playing the "race card" at home by pushing through new restrictions on political asylum in the run-up to the next election. In Brussels, the Home Secretary was charged by his partners with blocking a vital

initiative which many states believe would have helped improve race relations. Countries like Germany, the Netherlands and France, where racist violence by right-wing groups has been on the increase, argued strongly in favour of the measure.

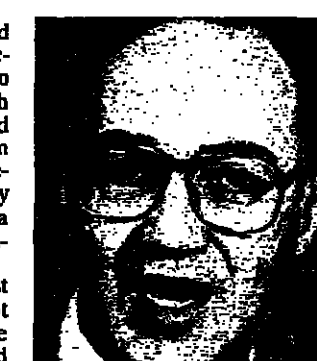
The resolution, drafted by the highly secretive K4 committee of senior officials from all member states, is the result of a lengthy study into racist violence and xenophobia. The proposal was put forward to balance new measures agreed yesterday imposing tighter EU controls on refugees and immigrants.

The study concluded that member states must co-operate and harmonise efforts to combat racist violence if the problem was to be eradicated. The recommendations included:

- Harmonising laws in each member state on the confiscation of racist or inflammatory publications, videos, films and television programmes.
- New Europe-wide intelligence centres to monitor the activities of extremists and the spread of racist materials.
- An examination of penalties in different member states, with a view to harmonisation.

The proposal was presented as a so-called "common action" which would be binding on member states. The text, which Mr Howard blocked, stated that international co-operation in this area was essential to prevent extremists in one country moving their activities to a neighbouring state where controls were less stringent.

British officials stressed last night that Britain was not against the principle of the proposals, and it is understood that Mr Howard might have accepted the resolution if it had not been legally binding.



Michael Howard: Lone stand against anti-racist measures

IN BRIEF

Karadzic risks trial
Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic faces a war-crimes trial after allegedly yielding to the Dayton peace deal. Page 14

Soames says sorry
Nicholas Soames has apologised to the Prime Minister for accusing the Princess of Wales of "paranoia". Page 4

Right-wing attack fails
A right-wing bid to snatch the chairmanship of the Tory 1992 committee has failed. Page 7

Today's weather
Dry and mild across much of England with sunny periods. Scotland will be dull with rainy spells. Section Two, page 33

Slick gambit puts chess king in check

WILLIAM HARTSTON
Chess Correspondent

The world of chess was thrown into fresh turmoil after a clever gambit toppled the autocratic leader of the game's international federation.

Florencio Campomanes finally met his match after 17 years as president of Fide, during which time his leadership style had astonished and often infuriated chess followers around the world, from world champions down to the humblest pawn-pushers.

But he found himself in an unwinnable position when more

than 60 delegates at a meeting of the Fide General Assembly in France signed a statement threatening to leave Fide forthwith, unless "full democracy" was restored.

The president was left with little alternative but to resign his post.

The final moves began with an allegation of electoral irregularities in Moscow last December that led to Mr Campomanes's fifth presidential term. The second move was a report on Fide finances suggesting that presidential spending had captured rather too high a proportion of their coffers. But the

third move was the one that left him with no escape.

Since 1993, when Garry Kasparov and Nigel Short left Fide to play a world title match under the auspices of their newly formed Professional Chess Association (PCA), there has been a deep schism within the chess world, with each organisation running its own "world championships".

The main plank of Mr Campomanes's re-election platform was a deal with Kasparov that promised rapprochement and a unifying match for the title next year.

As negotiations became

bogged down, however, Mr Campomanes came under increasing pressure.

He had found no sponsor for a Fide title match between Anatoly Karpov and Gata Kamsky, and he had reached no agreement with the PCA on the conditions for a unifying contest.

The Fide championship seemed stalemated by his inaction and led to his being openhanded, by both Karpov and Kamsky, of selling out to the enemy.

For once Mr Campomanes, who has a degree in political science from Harvard, found that

even his considerable political skills were not enough to save himself.

He resigned shortly after the Central Committee of Fide had passed a motion of no confidence in him "and his team" - a king finally pushed from power by his own infuriated pawns.

Bitter endgame, page 8



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We thought about calling it E.T.'s Finger, but it isn't long and knobbly with a glowing light at the end.

THE SERIOUS BEER WITH THE SILLY NAME.

CROMWELL STREET MURDERS

Search for victims: Allegations that Wests were part of a cult and of more murders in Scotland



Sites in question: Newspaper reports have claimed bodies are buried at other sites (from left): A car park at Castle meads, in Gloucester, a mill at Berkeley, Gloucester, and a site at Kinning Park in Glasgow

Photograph:

Police have no plans to excavate bodies

WILL BENNETT and JOHN ARLIDGE

Gloucestershire police are adamant that they have no plans to excavate for further bodies in the West investigation despite some newspaper claims yesterday giving details of sites where the Wests are alleged to have buried other victims.

Douglas French, Conservative MP for Gloucester, has

called for digging to be resumed. But Tony Butler, Chief Constable of Gloucester, said: "At present the inquiry has no substantive evidence that will support any inference that there are further victims of Fred and Rosemary West. There is certainly no evidence on which we would take further action to search in any location in Gloucestershire for the recovery of any human remains."

Detective Superintendent John Bennett, who headed the inquiry, said the police had investigated the possibility that other people had been involved with the Wests in the murders. One newspaper yesterday claimed that Frederick West said that they were part of a group called 'The Cult'. He said there was no evidence of any outside involvement in the killings and said that

if there had been those concerned would have been arrested and charged. Police in Glasgow said they were ready to investigate claims that Frederick West may have butchered up to four women in the city. West moved to Glasgow in the summer of 1963 with his Scots-born wife Rena. The couple lived in two flats in the Bridgeton and Kinning Park areas of the city. Those who knew

West at the time have raised suspicions that he may have killed several women there. Concern centres on an allotment West rented in Kinning Park near the river Clyde. One local man, John McLachlan, who lived next to the Wests in their flat in McLellan Street and had an allotment in the same area, told the *Independent* yesterday that West spent many hours in a hut on the allotment

working alone late into the night. Mr McLachlan, 57, said: "He was there at all hours up to two or three in the morning. Some people thought he may have been using the hut to meet girlfriends. But most of the time he was alone. No one knows what he was up to but he sure as hell wasn't gardening." Mr McLachlan, a former bus driver, recalled several conver-

sations he had had with West at the allotment. "Fred left certain parts of the ground uncultivated. I remember asking him from time to time: 'Why don't you grow something there?' He would say: 'Oh, I'm saving that for special purposes.' I didn't think much of that at the time but, recalling it all now, it seems very suspicious." Strathclyde police said yesterday that around 20 women

from the Glasgow had been missing since the 60s. Although there was no direct evidence linking West with any of the disappearances, detectives said they were ready to investigate any allegations and begin digging up the allotment if Gloucestershire police believed any bodies were buried there. Excavation would be difficult, however, since houses and roads had been built on the plot.

Press backlash: Newspapers in the dock over use of cheque-book journalism

Question over tainted evidence

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

Leading lawyers said yesterday that Rosemary West may have an "arguable" case in the Court of Appeal if she could prove evidence against her had been tainted or distorted by the promise of large sums of money from newspapers to the key prosecution witnesses.

But barristers blamed the Government for repeatedly failing to take action in the past over what has become an increasing feature of many big trials, from the Moors murders through to Jeremy Thorpe and that of Peter Sutcliffe.

Yesterday Geoffrey Robertson QC, a media law expert and defence lawyer said: "This scan-

dal goes back to 1979, when the present Government failed to prosecute its friends at the *Sunday Telegraph* who promised to pay £25,000 to Peter Bessell if the evidence secured the conviction of Jeremy Thorpe."

He said journalists should be free to interview witnesses. "The harm is when there is an offer of large sums of money on the assumption that their evidence will lead to a conviction. It is calculated to buy them into a story, which may be exaggerated in order to obtain more money from the media."

Michael Mansfield, another leading QC, went further, suggesting that interviews with witnesses or potential witnesses should be banned until after a trial is completed.

Yesterday Sir Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney General, said ministers were now "seriously considering" making cheque-book journalism illegal after the 20 examples in the West case.

He admitted there had been other controversial cases, but added: "This case has seen more buying up of witnesses' stories than we've seen for very many years."

"Here we've got something like 20 incidents and it goes absolutely contrary to the code of practice that was agreed by the newspaper industry themselves."

Sir Nicholas said both defence and prosecution lawyers had expressed concern over press buy-ups.

He is meeting the Lord Chancellor, who has called for

reports on the case, and the Home Secretary to discuss changing the law - either by extending contempt rules or by creating a new offence under criminal law.

Meanwhile lawyers for Rosemary West will be scrutinising the evidence of all of the witnesses who have been paid by the media for their stories, to see if their evidence could have been embellished because of the promise of money.

Mr Mansfield said: "I think this is a worrying issue that should be explored by the Court of Appeal. Certainly there may be an arguable case for appeal if it can be proved evidence has been altered or tainted."

It would not be the first time the Court of Appeal has ruled that press behaviour has led to injustice. Last year, the Taylor sisters were acquitted of murder, partly because appeal judges decided it would have been impossible for the jury not to have been influenced by prejudicial and inaccurate press reporting of the trial. This summer, however, the Attorney General refused to bring contempt proceedings against the newspapers concerned.

Richard Ferguson QC, who represents Rosemary West, was also the sisters' barrister.

Yesterday Mr Robertson said: "The one thing that would force the Government to outlaw payment to witnesses, would be if it prompted the Court of Appeal to quash the conviction of Mrs West."



Killers: Frederick and Rosemary, 'an uneducated woman' with 'a natural cunning'

Swearing replaced by silence after questioning

WILL BENNETT

Rosemary West's manner changed from confident and aggressive to cowed and silent during police interviews, one of the detectives who questioned her said yesterday.

Detective Sergeant Terence Onions said that when he and other officers arrived at 25 Cromwell Street, Gloucester, on 24 February last year she was angry and swore at police, her voice shrill.

"She was very sure of herself, extremely in control and aggressive and I don't think she really believed that the police were going to take her house and garden apart," DS Onions told the press yesterday.

Rosemary West was on home ground during this first interview at 25 Cromwell Street but the next day she and her husband, Frederick, were arrested and she was taken to Cheltenham Police Station.

There her whole demeanour changed as she realised that the police looking for her eldest daughter Heather, who had been missing since June 1987, could no longer be fobbed off with lies and excuses.

DS Onions said "She avoided eye-to-eye contact, her head was bowed and she huddled in the corner. In the house she had been aggressive and she sometimes swore."

Rosemary West, who was convicted of 10 murders of young women and girls by the jury at Winchester Crown Court on Tuesday and Wednesday, became increasingly unco-operative during the dozens of police interviews that followed.

DS Onions, 43, who has served with Gloucestershire Police for 20 years, said that eventually she exercised her right to silence and refused to answer any questions at all.

He continued: "I would say that she was an uneducated

woman. If I had to come down on one side of the fence I would say that she was not very intelligent but that she did have a natural cunning."

When DS Onions told Rosemary West that her husband had confessed to killing Heather, she shrieked "What. So you know where she is."

He said yesterday that she might have been trying to pretend that she was horrified at Heather's death or that she might have been genuinely appalled that West had confessed to the murder.

"She had some tears but whether they were real tears or crocodile tears I don't know. She may have been aghast but it may have been something she was portraying."

DS Onions said he had no plans to interview Rosemary West again. He explained "If she maintains the stance she has got at the moment there is little point in going to see her."

Papers told that deals were allowed

REBECCA FOWLER

The investigation into cheque book journalism, following the payment of witnesses in the Rosemary West trial, was undermined last night by claims that Lord McGregor, the former head of the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), gave guidance to tabloid newspapers that the industry's code of conduct was sufficiently ambiguous to allow such deals.

More than 20 witnesses in the West trial had lucrative contracts with newspapers for exclusive rights for their stories, prompting concern that their testimonies would not be reliable. The Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, has called for a report into the payments, and is to raise the matter with the Home Secretary.

But Lord McGregor, who was chairman of the PCC when Frederick and Rosemary West were arrested, allegedly told the *Daily Star* newspaper, which was anxious to ensure it did not breach the voluntary code of conduct followed by the newspaper industry, that it was un-

clear enough for newspapers to make such payments.

In clause nine of the PCC's voluntary code of practice it says: "Payments or offers of payment... should not be made directly, or through agents, to witnesses or potential witnesses in current or criminal proceedings, or to people engaged in crime or to their associates... except where the material concerned ought to be published in the public interest."

The *Daily Star* paid £3,000 to Anne Marie Davies, Rosemary West's stepdaughter, in a deal made before she gave evidence. She told of being abused and raped by her parents when she was 8-years-old.

"We went out of our way to make sure we were not breaching either the letter of the spirit of the code," Phil Walker, editor of the *Daily Star*, is reported as saying in *The Economist* today.

The PCC, under its current regime, announced on Wednesday that it would review the issue of payments to witnesses.

Lord McGregor refused to comment last night on whether he had offered guidance to



Anne Marie Davies: Made deal with newspaper

newspaper editors. "I have no desire to embarrass or make things difficult for my successor by saying anything."

A separate review will be undertaken by Lord Mackay, together with Sir Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney-General, and Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, to look at possible changes to the Contempt of Court Act 1981. It was last reviewed in 1966 following the Moors murder case, when two witnesses were offered money by a newspaper.

The *Sun* newspaper, which made a £20,000 deal with Caroline Owens, a former lodger at the Wests' home in Gloucester, defended the payment yesterday. Editor Stuart Higgins said moves to curb cheque book journalism were "crazy" and unrealistic.

Press watchdog may act over witness deals

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Media Correspondent

Newspapers faced growing condemnation yesterday over payments made to potential witnesses in the Rosemary West case.

During the trial it emerged that Janet Leach, Frederick West's "appropriate person" who sat in on police interviews with West, initially lied to the court about having accepted an offer of £100,000 from the *Daily Mirror* for her story. She denied embellishing her evidence to make it more marketable.

Other paid witnesses included West's daughter Anne Marie Davies; Caroline Owens, the victim of an indecent assault by the Wests in 1973, who was paid £9,500 by the *Sun* and is due to get another £10,500; and Kathryn Halliday, an ex-lover of Rosemary West, who got £9,000 from the *Sunday Mirror*.

The Press Complaints Commission will discuss whether to strengthen its voluntary code on Wednesday but despite the outcry it has had no complaints about the issue.

Clause nine of the PCC's

code of practice, drawn up in agreement with newspaper editors, states that payment or offers of payment should not be made by the press to witnesses or potential witnesses in criminal proceedings unless it is in the public interest.

That clause has never been tested and a problem for the commission is that there is no case law. It is also difficult to define when a person becomes a "potential witness".

Nor is it clear how the PCC would know when someone had breached the clause until after the court case. Its brief is to act on complaints, and few witnesses would complain if paid.

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, has commissioned a report into the incidence of cheque-book journalism even though the Official Solicitor, who is under his jurisdiction, recently said the access to Fred West's archive for a biography to benefit his children.

Lord Mackay's office said: "He will discuss what further steps are needed with colleagues - the Home Secretary, the Attorney-General and other interested ministers."

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CROMWELL STREET MURDERS

Safeguards offer hope of fewer blunders

NICHOLAS TIMMINS,
Public Policy Editor

"Can you guarantee that something on this scale won't happen again?" Michael Honey, the Chief Executive of Gloucestershire County Council was asked, after Rosemary West had been sentenced.

"You can never guarantee anything in this life," was his instant response.

But in the trail of clues, hints and missed opportunities stretching back through more than 25 years, social services,

health workers and others are adamant that there were moments when things went clearly wrong.

The first moment that sticks out is the West's sexual assault on Caroline Owens, their former nanny, in 1972. The Wests were fined £50 each. The police made no reference to social services. And social services took no action, despite the case being covered by local newspapers.

Today, they would have become involved. Police would pass the information on, and an investigation to see if the chil-

dren should be on the "at risk" register would follow, with police, health, social services, education and the NSPCC all sharing whatever information they had at a case conference.

By then, however, Fred West had already killed people outside his family at least twice and had disposed of Rena, his first wife. Charmaine, the first of the murders for which Rosemary was convicted, was also dead.

Today, contacts between health and social services would also be different. The West family appeared at casualty de-

partments with children suffering from thrush – frequently a sexually transmitted disease – and one with gonorrhoea.

Anne Marie was taken in on her ninth birthday in 1973 with bruising and scratches on her breast and when 15 she was in hospital with an ectopic pregnancy. But all the events were recorded in different files and no connection was made.

Nowadays, the level of suspicion among medical and nursing staff is higher. More hospitals have computerised records, and nationally there is

a programme to introduce a common NHS number for each patient, which should greatly improve record linkage.

Education officials also failed to report Fred's 1987 statement that he had "laid out" a child – an event that today would be more likely to be passed on to social services.

But for all that, John Ransford, secretary of the Association of Directors of Social Services, said yesterday: "No-one with any sense could give an absolute guarantee that it couldn't happen again."

"But we can, with a degree of certainty, say that given the way child protection procedures have moved on in the past 25 years, it is extremely unlikely that a situation like that would build up and the signs not be picked up."

Child protection, however, still depended crucially on information being exchanged – consistently identified as a flaw in the system by more than 40 child abuse inquiries since the death of Maria Colwell in 1973 – and on the individual judgments made by health, social

services, police and other professionals.

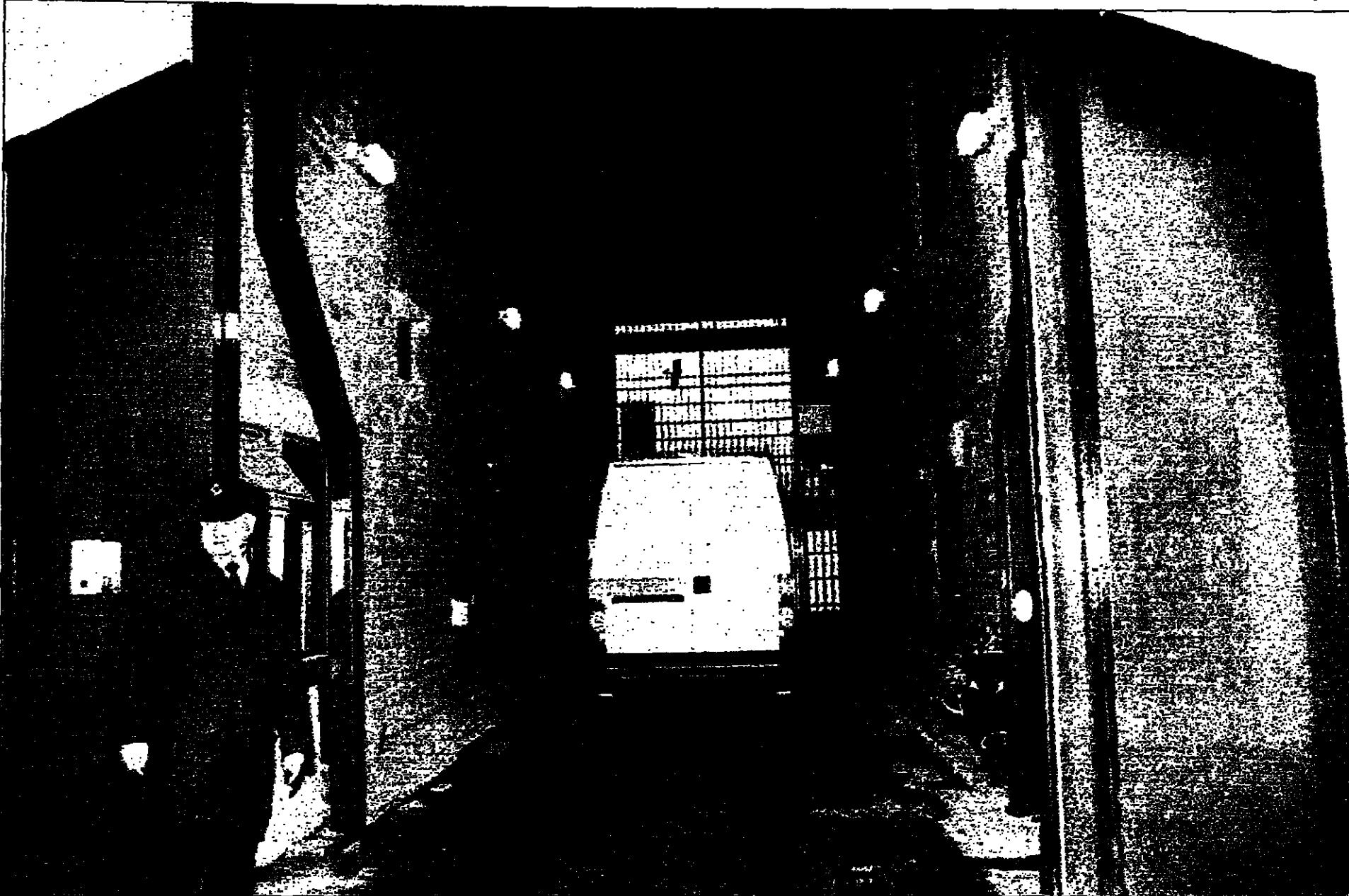
It was also clear from the trial that many adults in and around Cromwell Street knew at least some of what was happening, but did not pass the information on. The child abuse inquiry which finally led to the murders being uncovered was triggered by a child telling a police officer that one of the West's children was being abused.

Child protection, however, cannot protect the teenage runaways and others who became

the Wests' main murder victims. The charitable National Missing Persons Helpline now holds data on 14,000 missing people – although it still lacks full national coverage – and it is starting to use pattern matching of where people disappear, which it says may help spot serial killers earlier.

Mary Asprey, a co-founder of the charity, said yesterday: "We would all be very silly to think it couldn't happen again. But we hope not to the same extent. We would start to see a pattern emerge."

Killers' sentences: Rosemary West joins list of 20 infamous murderers who will never be freed from jail



One-way ticket: Rosemary West being driven into Durham jail yesterday where she will be housed in H wing

Photograph: North News and Pictures

Girls in care paid visits to Wests' home

NICHOLAS TIMMINS

At least seven teenage girls living in care at Jordan's Brook House in Gloucester made secret visits to Fred and Rosemary West's house at 25 Cromwell Street, police and social services have established.

But there may have been more, Deryk Mead, director of Gloucestershire social services, admitted yesterday after court evidence that Fred and Rosemary West may have "targeted" the home, picking up vulnerable girls. At times a "scruffy van" was seen around the gates of the home. "But we are clear that nobody knew at the time," Mr Mead said.

"Miss A", who gave evidence at Rosemary's trial, lived at the home and became a victim of the Wests' sexual obsession in 1977, and Alison Chambers, a persistent absconder from the home, was murdered and buried in the garden of Cromwell Street. At least one other resident is known to have been sexually abused by the Wests.

Jordan's Brook opened in 1970 as a 24-bed Home Office-run approved school for 13 to 17 year old girls, taking young offenders from an area stretching from Cornwall, through parts of Wales to Manchester. In 1973 it became a Gloucestershire run community home, but with a similarly wide catchment area until 1981.

A check on the individual

files of more than 1,000 girls who stayed at Jordan's Brook between 1970 and 1994, and on all the home's records and log books, shows no record of any link between girls at the home and either of the Wests, or with their homes in Midland Road and Cromwell Street.

But from follow-up interviews, Gloucestershire now believes that seven girls during that time were probably involved with the West household in some way, four of whom say they were not abused in any way.

But Mr Mead said social services could not be sure that was the limit. Some former residents were saying they did not have any contact with the Wests when they may have done. And claims that the Wests targeted the home "might possibly be true", he said. "But there is nothing in the records to show that, and there is nothing to say that the van that was seen was Fred's. There is no evidence, but there is nothing to say it never happened."

Mr Mead says that all the evidence from the council's own inquiries and the trial was that the girls were "intimidated into keeping quiet". They were given a warm welcome. But they were told not to tell the authorities they had visited Cromwell Street – and they did not.

Club of the damned recruits its newest life member

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

The doors of Durham jail yesterday closed on Rosemary West at the start of a sentence that will only end with her death.

Although it has officially to be confirmed by both Lord Taylor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Home Secretary, she is certain to join the infamous ranks of the 20 inmates for whom a life sentence really does mean life.

She joins Myra Hindley, the Moors murderers – and the only other women on the natural life list – and other serial killers such as Dennis Nilsen, who murdered up to 16 young men at his flat and Robert Black, who killed several young girls.

Like those prisoners who, with no prospect of release, present special problems for the Prison Service – increased risk of suicide, behavioural problems, even escape – she will be allocated a specially trained personal officer to monitor and supervise her detention.

She will be interviewed and assessed by doctors and psychiatrists and will be placed on round the clock watch to prevent any suicide attempt – or any attack from other inmates on Durham's secure H wing.

The special wing housed within the predominantly male Victorian jail, perched on the city limits, currently holds 44 women. Their offences range from murder and arson to armed robbery and serious violent assault. Recently re-

bished the once notorious H wing housed the IRA terrorists Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer until they were transferred to Northern Ireland.

If staff perceive any threat to Mrs West, or if she herself feels under threat, she could be segregated for her own protection.

Her normal day in the unit, the only one in the country, should involve about 12 hours outside her cell, taking part in education and "purposeful" activities, including work in the jail's textile workshop, or in the unit's activity centre making pottery or soft toys.

She will be allowed two, two-hour visits a month – building up to four visits in return for good behaviour.

Although it was always sus-

pected that for some prisoners life meant literally life, it was only officially confirmed last year following a House of Lords ruling. It forced the Home Secretary to lift the secrecy which allowed him the final say over when those serving compulsory life sentences for murder should be released. Last December about 2,500 mandatory life sentences for the first time exactly how long they would spend in jail – and were given the chance to make representations about the sentence.

About 20 learnt they will never be released. Earlier this year, one of them, Jeremy Bamber, jailed for the murder of his family, lost a test case in which he argued a whole life sentence amounted to a breach of natural justice.

Counselling for anguished jurors

PETER VICTOR and
WILL BENNETT

The image of Rose West in the dock, the details of her appalling crimes and the suffering of her victims will haunt jurors, survivors and relatives of the dead for years to come.

A wide range of professional counsellors have been drafted in to offer advice and comfort to the dozens of people connected with the case.

Normally, jurors are encouraged to contact court ushers if they are distressed by the evidence in a trial but the arrangements in the Wests' case go much further than this. Court officials decided to provide extra counselling last week.

Two welfare officers from the Lord Chancellor's department have been brought in to help anguished jurors deal with their distress or anxiety.

One of the officers is a qualified counsellor and both are trained in dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. Jurors will be told that they can contact these two officers, get in touch with their family doctors or telephone a freephone health line which gives details of counselling services.

In addition, a specialist team from Gloucester Victims' Sup-



In the witness box: Artist's impression of Rosemary West giving evidence in court

port is providing a confidential service for others affected by the Cromwell Street inquiry, including "survivors" and victims' relatives.

A nine-member team was trained to deal with the case, a spokesman for the organisation said. He said that training sessions were given by specialists whose expertise covered death through violent crime, adding: "There is nothing like the West case, it is without precedent."

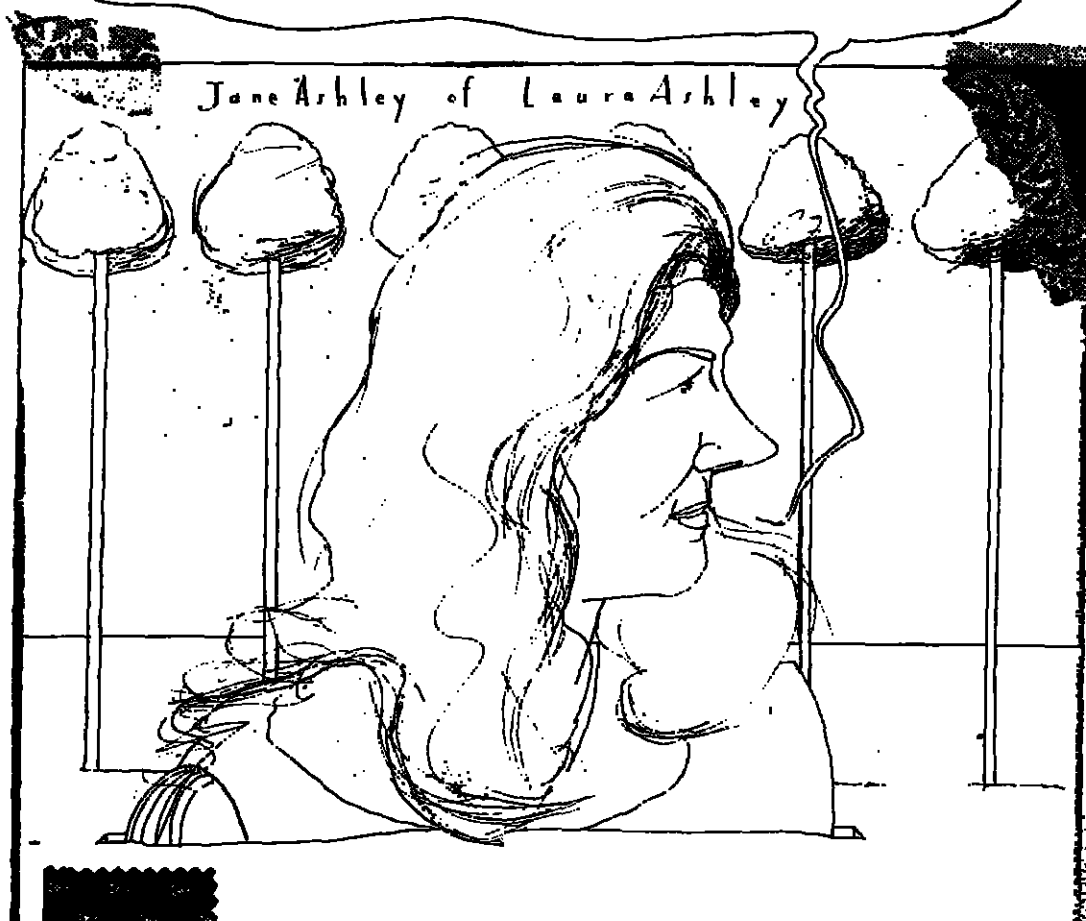
Funding was provided by Gloucestershire County Council and the police, which asked the victims' support group to provide a dedicated service for all those affected by the revelations thrown up by the case.

The Gloucester group, which had a co-ordinating role working with police, social services and other victims' agencies, has received numerous calls for advice, the spokesman said. "We have had a lot of distress at all

levels. We have talked to people from all walks of life, who are affected differently. But all have been touched in some way by the horror of the situation."

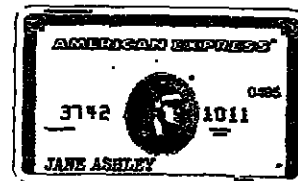
Among the callers were relatives of missing persons, he said. "It gives them a chance to talk about it, to come to some understanding of what is happening and what is involved. We help where we can... This is really about people being hurt and they want to be listened to."

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news

Libel trial: 'Newspaper allegations about holiday at homosexual love-nest were part of campaign aimed at forcing resignation'

Malicious sister tried to destroy MP, court told

IAN MACKINNON

The embittered sister of a Tory MP mounted a campaign to force his resignation by accusing him of having a homosexual affair, a jury was told yesterday.

In a series of telephone calls and taped conversations, Lynne Garling, sister of David Ashby, the MP for Leicestershire North West, passed information seeking to expose him in an article in the *Sunday Times*, the High Court was told.

However, in telephone conversations with Mr Ashby's wife, Sihana, from whom he was separated when the article appeared last year, Mrs Garling swore that she had not been the source of the information.

Geoffrey Shaw QC, for Mr Ashby, told the court that just before the article was published on 16 January, his client

had told a *Sunday Times* reporter that his sister was "a vicious, sick woman motivated solely by malice" and was out to destroy him.

Mr Ashby, 55, who has been an MP since 1983, is suing the newspaper for libel over the article which he says makes him out to be a "homosexual, liar and hypocrite".

Times Newspapers and Andrew Neil, the former editor of the *Sunday Times*, deny libel, saying that Mr Ashby was conducting a homosexual relationship with Dr Carian Kilduff.

The article said Mr Ashby and an unnamed man spent a night in November, 1993 at a hotel in Goa which was a "love nest" that asked few questions about its guests. Mr Shaw said it was true that his client had spent a night at the hotel, but he had been alone and had not spent it with a male friend.

The information about the holiday had come from Mrs Garling and her husband, Victor, in a series of anonymous telephone calls, said Mr Shaw.

The newspaper had earlier published another story, not the subject of an anonymous tip, saying Mrs Ashby, 53, had been furious because the couple had split up when he left her for another man. Mrs Ashby confronted Mrs Garling asking if she had provided the material in the story, which she denied.

However, in the wake of the publication of the article on 9 January, other newspapers published allegations that Mr Ashby had shared a double bed at a French chateau with Dr Kilduff. Mr Shaw told the jury that when questioned by journalists on the doorstep of his flat in south-west London, Mr Ashby denied that he was having a ho-

mosexual affair but conceded that he had shared hotel rooms with men to save money.

However, a second story appeared in the *Sunday Times* when Mrs Garling again contacted the newspaper to tell of the holiday in Goa. The reporter tried to reassure Mrs Garling that she was doing the right thing - saying that if Mr Ashby, who stressed the importance of family values in the 1992 general election, had been openly homosexual the paper would not have been interested.

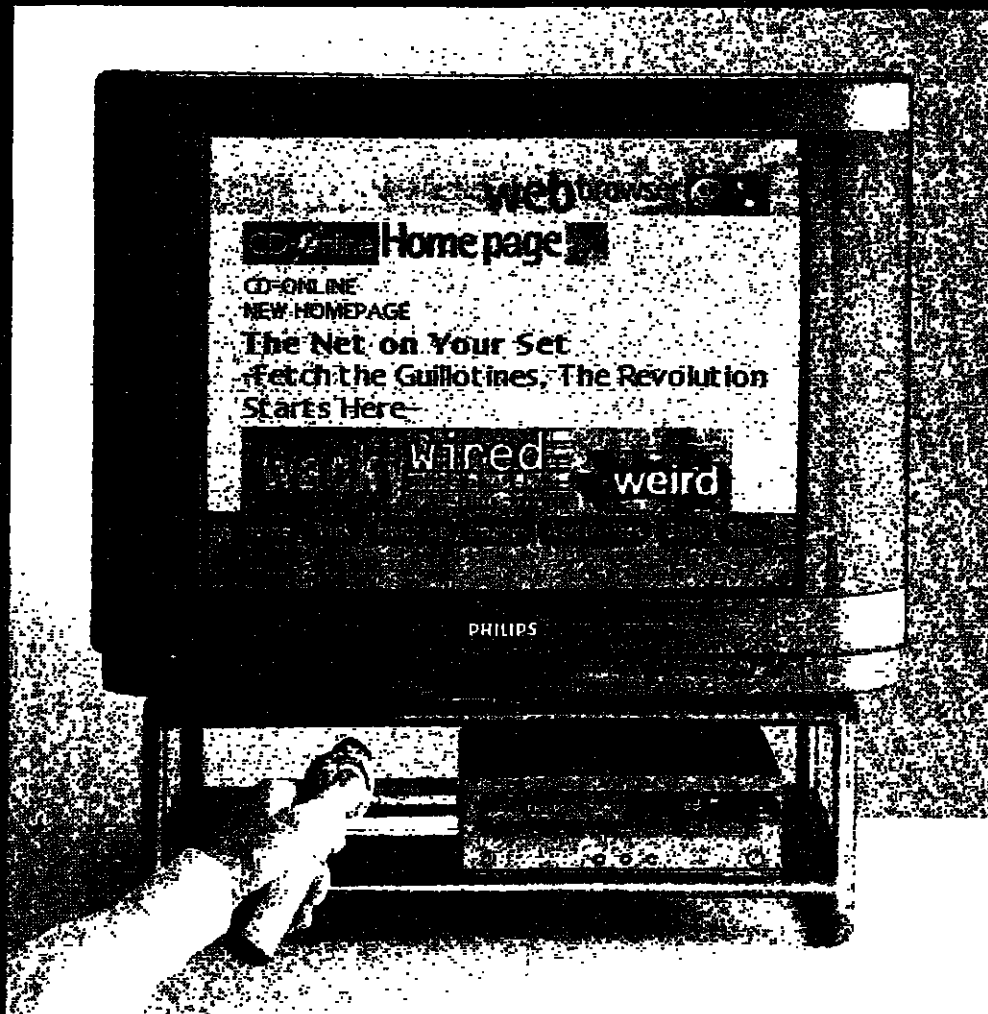
The reporter told Mrs Garling that it would force her brother's resignation from Parliament within two weeks, Mr Shaw said. "From that passage you learn that the joint object of Lynne Garling and the *Sunday Times* was to force, for their own reasons, David Ashby to resign as an MP."

The hearing continues today.



Legal battle: David Ashby and his daughter Alexandra outside the High Court yesterday Photograph: Edward Webb

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PHILIPS

PM rebukes minister for jibe at Diana

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

Nicholas Soames personally apologised to the Prime Minister before being slapped down by John Major in the Commons yesterday for going over the top in accusing the Princess of Wales of being in the "advanced stages of paranoia".

Mr Soames, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, was not threatened with the sack, but it was made clear at Westminster by senior Conservative sources that his prospects for promotion had been damaged because of an alleged "lack of judgement".

Mr Major was prepared to tolerate his initial outburst against the Princess, but was irritated when Mr Soames continued to attack her publicly the next day. Downing Street had said he was free to speak personally, but yesterday the Prime Minister answered Labour calls for him to sack the minister by saying bluntly: "I do not expect any more comments."

Last night, Mr Soames's ministerial job was not at risk, but he has been left in no doubt that his role as a courtier to Buckingham Palace could not be allowed to override his ministerial duties again.

The Prime Minister's Office refused to elaborate on his future, but the *Independent* has learnt that Mr Soames went to see Mr Major on Wednesday to apologise for the row over his

remarks, and he made it clear that he would not be making any more comments on behalf of the Prince of Wales.

Mr Soames apologised for a prominent report claiming that he had asked the Prime Minister to intervene at the Palace by asking the Queen to seek a divorce between Prince Charles and the Princess of Wales. He told friends: "It's absolutely untrue and I am saying no more."

A former equerry to the Prince, Mr Soames, a grandson of Winston Churchill, was upset at the criticism his remarks in support of Prince Charles encountered after his appearance on the *Newsnight* programme on BBC2 on Monday, immediately after the screening of the interview with the Princess of Wales on *Panorama* on BBC1.

As the criticism mounted, Mr Soames told the *Independent* that he believed a divorce would be best for everyone concerned. As the Palace offered an olive branch of talks with the Princess, Mr Soames said the Princess should be given a role as an ambassador for Britain abroad, but she could not act "as a freelance".

The question of a role for the Princess and the divorce are understood to have been discussed when Mr Major had an audience with the Queen on Tuesday. He felt Mr Soames had gone too far, and decided to make that clear yesterday.

French ro-ro ferries may face UK safety ban

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

French roll-on roll-off ferries may be banned from British ports because France is refusing to agree to higher safety standards drawn up in the wake of the *Estonia* disaster.

The negotiations within the International Maritime Organisation, which is meeting in London throughout this week, are deadlocked over the refusal of the French to agree to the imposition of new safety designs on ferry operators.

The British, along with a group of six north European nations - Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Norway, and Sweden - want to ensure that disasters like the *Estonia* and the *Herald of Free Enterprise* are not repeated by redesigning ferries which can survive with up to 50cms of water in the car deck. This would be in addition to the existing Safety of Life at Sea 90 (Solas 90) standards imposed following the *Herald* disaster in 1987, in which nearly 300 people died.

But, according to a source close to the British negotiating team, the French "are taking a very negative attitude towards improved standards". The French are worried that any new international standards would also be imposed on ferries operating in the Mediterranean where they claim the sea is calmer. The new standards were drawn up by an IMO commit-

tee of experts following the sinking of the *Estonia* a year ago, in which 900 people lost their lives.

The meeting is continuing until next Wednesday when there will be a signing ceremony and Bill O'Neill, the IMO's Canadian secretary-general, said that he wants full international agreement and not just a partial deal.

Currently, the negotiations are deadlocked because the British want the new standards imposed on all ferries operating to and from the United Kingdom, while the French want their ferries exempt.

If the French continue to refuse to agree to the new standard, ministers have intimated that French ferries could be banned. A compromise, which the British government is trying to avoid, might involve allowing the European Commission to set new safety rules.

The current Solas 90 standard merely says that ships should be able to survive a certain level of damage following a collision in seas with waves of a maximum height of 1.5 metres. The problem with roll-on roll-off ferries is that once water gets on to the car deck, which stretches throughout the whole length of the boat, it starts welling about, causing the ship to capsize. In the *Herald* disaster, it was estimated that the ship keeled on to its side within 90 seconds of water getting on to the car deck.

Student grants: Demonstration against 'final straw' of new savings as claims of hardship on campus intensify

Thousands march against cash cuts

VICKY WARD

Ten thousand students marched through London yesterday to demonstrate against Government plans to cut student grants by a further 10 per cent next year.

The National Union of Students, which organised the demonstration, said students were already suffering from financial hardship as a result of a 10 per cent cut in grants this year. And "the final straw," according to a spokesman, was the Government's declared intention to privatise student loans.

The NUS President, Jim Murphy, claims student hardship is reaching intolerable levels. "Recent research by the NUS found that one in three students missed meals because of hardship, and university medical centres are now acknowledging real problems with stress-related illnesses among students."

Student loans were introduced five years ago at the same time as the student grant, which went towards meeting living costs, was frozen in value. In the 1993 Budget, the Government announced its intention of accelerating the switch from grants to loans by cutting the value of the student grant by up to ten per cent a year for three years and increasing the amount available from student loans by an equivalent amount.

The DFEE said yesterday that in the current academic year, grants were cut by between 5.3 per cent and 8.6 per cent, depending on individual circumstances. The grant is currently £1,885 a year; £2,340 in London.

Financial stress among students is being cited by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals as a possible reason for increasing student drop-out rates. According to the most recent figures available 40,000 students dropped out in 1992/93 - 25 per cent up on the previous year.

The stress factor did seem to be a major inspiration for the demonstrators. According to Rhinana, a 19-year-old under-

graduate from Sheffield, she was not marching on her own behalf, but for her friends. She said the stress of having a family, as many mature students did, combined with working late nights in pubs to find the money to pay essential living costs, inflicted such stress that those students often had to drop out.

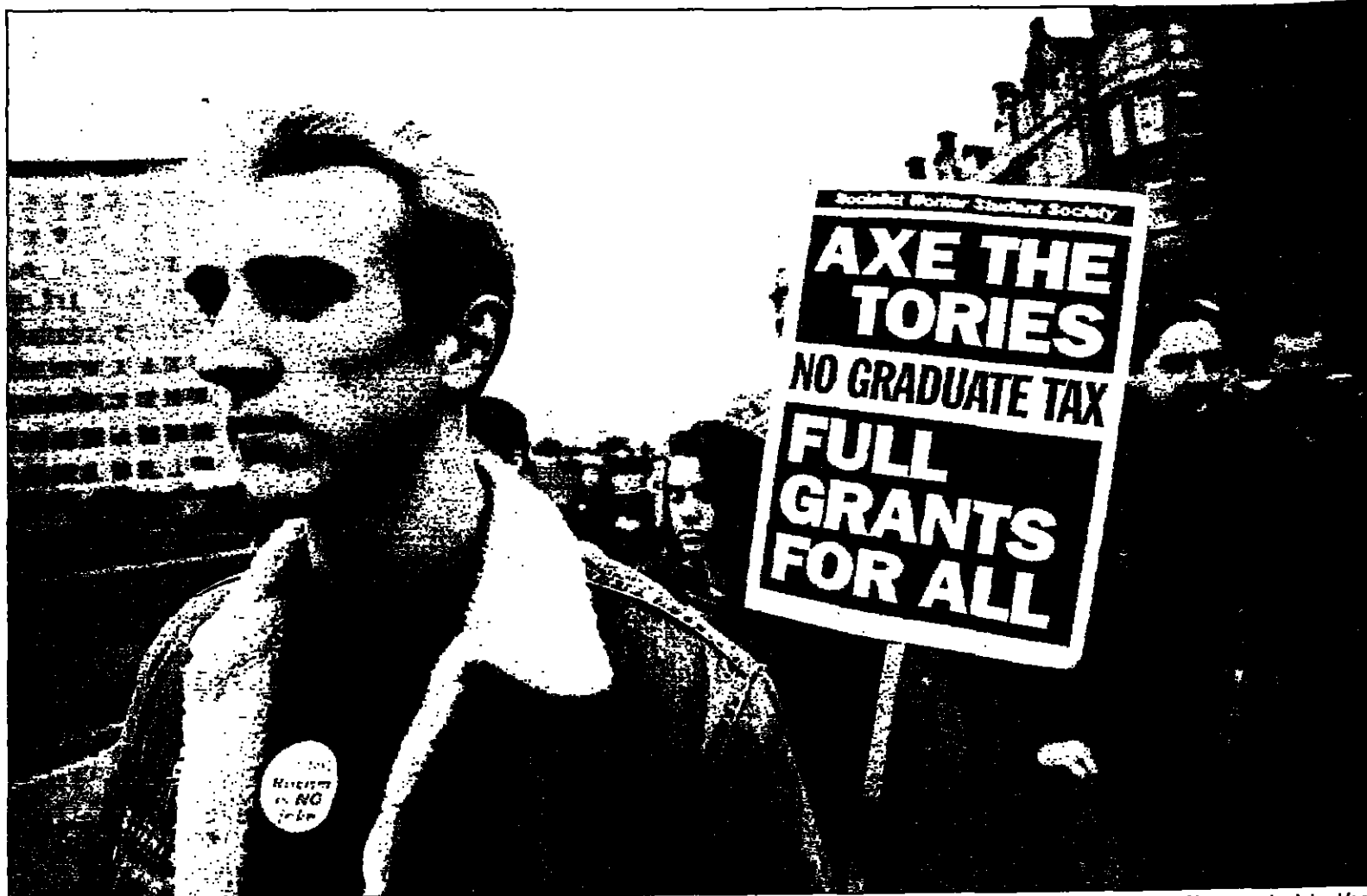
A woman student from Doncaster University, who did not wish to be named, said that IT classes there had dropped to only five from about 20 because of course costs. In Doncaster students were particularly aggrieved by recent cuts in transport allowance. Doncaster's three campuses, she said, were at different ends of the city and most students used the bus, which cost them £1 to move from site to site.

The purchase of textbooks, according to Jo, 19, from Leicester, and Marie, 20, from Durham, both studying combined science, was a major expense that had been overlooked. Jo said she had to buy four books a term at a cost of £20 each. Her total annual grant is £1,000. Both said they had to work during the holidays, which did not interfere with their studies too much at present, but they were worried about what would happen when it came to their finals. Three of Jo's friends dropped out last year because they could no longer afford it.

Marie said that after her college bills had been paid she had been left with £50 to live on. She does not get a grant, so her parents have to make up the rest, which is a strain on them.

Steve Okelo, 30, an overseas student from Kenya, studying at Sunderland, was marching because he said his overseas grant fell short of his living requirements by £30 a week. This, he said, was partly to do with exchange rates and banking arrangements in his own country that the Government had not taken into account.

There were signs, perhaps that not all of the protesters were as hard-up as they claimed. When one of them thought no-one was looking, he whipped out his mobile phone.



Can't pay, won't pay: Student Ben Hutchins takes part in the protest march in Westminster yesterday

Photograph: John Voss

£142m owed to loans firm may not be repaid

WENDY BERLINER

About £142m borrowed so far from the Student Loans Company may never be recovered, according to company estimates in a report published yesterday by the National Audit Office.

Most of the money - some £127m - may not be paid back because the graduates never earn enough to reach the threshold to start repayments, or they die before they do.

Some £15m will be owed by graduates who do not make repayments and are never caught. More than 11,000 students owing £1.8m are already in default.

The company, which is planning to increase staffing in its collections department from 83 to 150 within the next five years in order to chase defaulters.

The Student Loans Company has outstanding loans of £1.8bn, loaned since the scheme was first introduced five years

ago to top up grants for student living costs. The average student loan in the current academic year is £1,040.

Banks and other financial institutions are to be invited to bid to run a privatised student loan scheme under a government Bill published last week.

Ministers believe the costs of the existing loans scheme are growing too high and that alternatives have to be found. When the Student Loans Com-

pany was originally set up the big banks refused to take part, mainly because they would not make any money out of it. They remain sceptical about this latest overture from the Government.

The proportion of students taking out loans has grown rapidly since the Government first froze the value of the student maintenance grant and then began to reduce it.

In the 1994-95 academic year

55 per cent of eligible students took out 517,000 loans, compared with 28 per cent of eligible students taking out 180,000 loans five years earlier.

The National Audit Office decided to examine the company after thousands of students suffered delays in receiving their loans in autumn last year.

The Operations of the Student Loans Company Limited, by the National Audit Office, is available from HMSO: £8.95.

IN BRIEF

Papal plea 'may sway divorce vote'

Irish government sources have claimed the eleventh-hour intervention by the Pope may have hardened the "Yes" vote in today's divorce referendum.

They claim he has antagonised religious minorities and may provoke a higher turnout by pro-divorce voters. On Wednesday, the Pope urged Irish pilgrims to pray even more intensely for the welfare of marriage, and emphasised "the unbreakable unity" between husband and wife.

Section Two, page 2

Heathrow crash

More than 350 passengers and crew escaped unhurt when two jets collided on the ground at Heathrow. An airport spokesman said the accident occurred as a Gulf Air Airbus A340 and a British Airways 757 were manoeuvring on a taxiway before take-off.

Churchill exhibition

The Churchill papers are on display to the public for the first time since their controversial £12.5m purchase with National Lottery money in April. The four-day show at Churchill College, Cambridge, is a taster for a national tour next year.

Stroke test

A simple blood test could predict an individual's risk of stroke, according to a study of more than 5,600 men aged 40 to 59 by British and Norwegian scientists, the *Lancet* reports.

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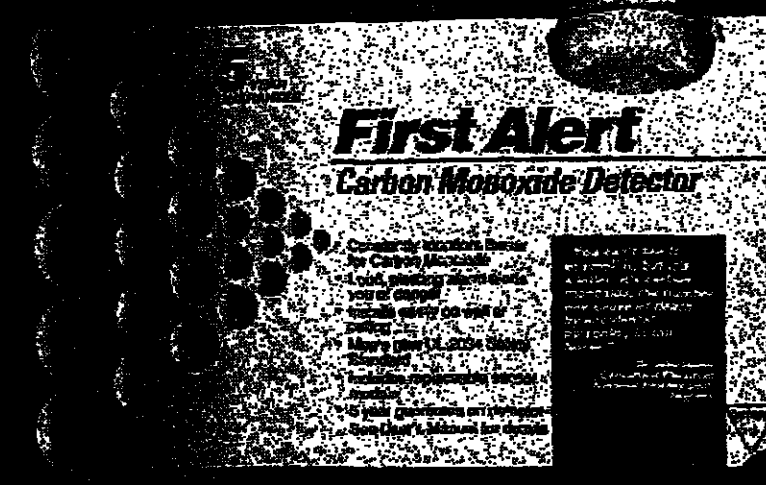
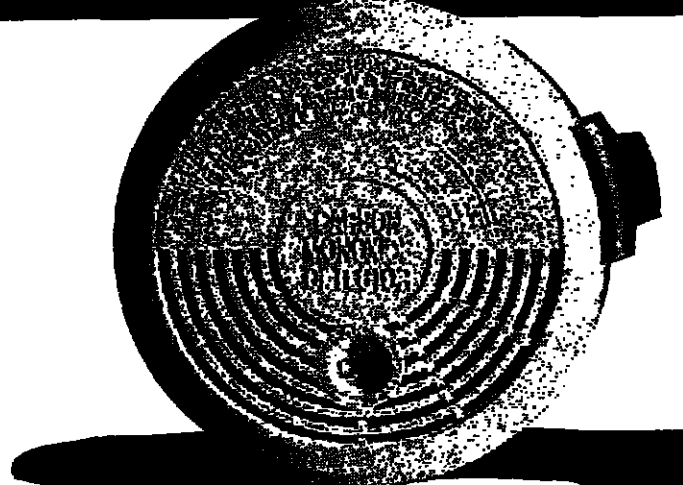
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Mr T.C. (Cheshire)

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news

Health policy: MPs say present shortcomings show need for charter to govern long-term treatment of elderly patients

Committee calls for end to 'lottery' of NHS care

GLENDA COOPER

MPs yesterday called on the Department of Health to end the "care lottery", by setting up a national long-term care charter which makes clear the service people can expect in their later years.

Their call came the day after the Health Service Ombudsman criticised North Worcestershire Health Authority for failing to provide NHS care by discharging a 55-year-old stroke victim into a private nursing home and saddling his wife with a bill for thousands of pounds.

The charter, outlined by the Commons' Health Select Committee report, should include a named list of services and a "minimum" list of specialist equipment, home aids, and time scales for assessment.

Eligibility criteria for these should also be "needs-led" rather than "resource-led", with the committee saying it "failed to see" why the NHS should not be responsible for funding all the care of people in nursing homes who required special health care support.

During the mid to late 1980s, there was a huge increase in private residential and nursing home places for elderly people, with the number of places in private-sector residential accommodation rising from 44,000 in 1982 to 164,000 in 1994. Over the same period, the number of nursing home places rose from 18,000 to nearly 150,000. During the same period, the number of local authority residential home places fell by nearly 50,000 - from 116,000 to 69,000.

The MPs, from all parties, had earlier expressed concerns on "significant geographical variations" and called for national eligibility criteria to be set. Subsequently the Department of Health announced that it would monitor arrangements.

The committee called on the department to publish the outcome of individual health authorities' policies and criteria, and to outline the action it will take against those who depart

from the national framework. It added that the charter should specify that NHS-funded patients entering a nursing home should have the right, subject to necessary clinical or financial conditions, to choose their own nursing home.

The department should also seek evidence from local authorities to discover the extent of the problem concerning "preserved rights" residents.

In April 1993, the Government transferred the financial responsibility for all new occupants from the DSS to local authorities, but left funding of existing residents with the DSS.

Where homes' charges now exceed Income Support, relatives have had to make up the shortfall, with local authorities not allowed to intervene until the old person faces eviction. "We recommend that the Department conduct a review of the existing arrangements," it said. "No elderly resident should face eviction in the future."

The Royal College of Nursing welcomed the MPs' call for national standards and backed the proposal for a charter, but said it wanted to see radical reform of funding arrangements.

General Secretary Christine Hancock said: "I urge the Government to act now to end the care lottery. Nursing must be an NHS responsibility. We need a strong national framework and clear national standards to keep faith with a generation of older people who believed that the NHS would take care of their health needs in later life."

Harry Cayton, executive director of the Alzheimer's Society, applauded the recommendations. "If they are acted on by the Government they will do much to improve the present uneven and unfair provision of NHS long-term care," he said.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities said the report's rhetoric must be translated into action. "That means extra resources," said Cllr Rita Stringfellow, chair of its social services committee.



Battle weary: Cyril Hudson says the strain of fighting his mother's case contributed to losing his job. Photograph: Joel Chant

Mother who was 'pawn in a game'

Cyril Hudson's story is, he believes, "sadly all too common". A heart attack left his mother unable to cope in her flat nearly four years ago, and, with the help of social workers, her son chose a home from a list they gave him, writes Glenda Cooper.

Mr Hudson and his sister thought that their mother still had significant funds from the sale of her house some years before. But in fact the rent had swallowed most of it up.

"I applied to the DSS for income support and they came up with the maximum available which was £240 a week, but I had to make up the deficit which added up to £5,000 a year," he said.

Mr Hudson's mother Violet is one of the elderly still funded by the DSS because she was in a home before April 1993.

Income support has not risen at the same level as her home fees, leaving her son to make up the shortfall. The select committee wants the Department of Health to question health authorities on how widespread the problem is. Mr Hudson struggled to make up the deficit from his earnings and his own savings.

CASE STUDY

But then he was made redundant from his job.

"I was told by social services that until my mother was actually evicted by the home they couldn't step in and do anything," he said. "Once she was out, then they would be responsible, put her back in and make up the difference."

So a running dispute started between Mr Hudson's home, the owner of Mrs Hudson's home. Mr Hudson refused to pay more than the minimum £240. The owner had the choice to accept that or evict her.

"It's been very traumatic. The strain was contributory to losing my job," he said. "I've finished up in front of a psychiatrist and a psychotherapist."

Matters came to a head on 31 October when the owner finally served notice to quit. It was finally resolved by moving Mrs Hudson to a smaller room which costs less, making her what her son calls "a captive prisoner". "There's a poker game going on between the Government and the nursing homes and old people are the pawns," he said.

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MP urges law to end 'Jackal' fraud loophole

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

A Labour MP is calling on the Government to outlaw impersonation after he obtained a birth certificate under false pretences, like a scene from the *Day of the Jackal*.

Jeff Rooker, the Labour MP for Birmingham Perry Barr, is pressing the Prime Minister to fulfil a pledge to close the loophole in the law, which was promised in a Government White Paper five years.

He believes organised gangs are using birth certificates as a fraudulent means of obtaining

the woman. She confessed that she was a Nigerian national, using a birth certificate which had been legally obtained.

Mr Rooker said the case highlighted the need for legislation to make it an offence to impersonate people in order to obtain a birth certificate. To illustrate the ease with which birth certificates can be obtained, Mr Rooker got a copy of the birth certificate for the other twin.

In May, the Prime Minister assured Mr Rooker that the need for the legislation "has not been lost between the Home Office and the Department of Health".

"It remains the Government's intention to introduce the necessary legislation to implement the remaining White Paper proposals, when Parliamentary time permits, irrespective of the outcome of the consultation on identity cards. We are seeking to make other important reforms, however, and we have not yet been able to find a place in the legislative programme for what would be a lengthy Registration Bill," John Major said.

The failure of the Government to include a Registration Bill in the Queen's Speech for the new session of Parliament was condemned by Mr Rooker. In the *Day of the Jackal*, a hired assassin assumes a new identity by obtaining a birth certificate of a dead person. Mr Rooker said organised crime could easily exploit this loophole.

"The Government says it is concerned about organised fraud. One of the keys to that is the ease of access to the birth certificates. They said in 1990 they were going to close [the loophole] down. They have done nothing. That leads me to conclude that their pretence that the Immigration and Asylum Bill is to do with a social security crackdown is so much hype," Mr Rooker said.



Jeff Rooker: Concerned at the implications for crime

a wide range of benefits, including a full British passport.

Mr Rooker's involvement follows the discovery of a fraud involving two of his constituents, whose twins died at birth 30 years ago in a Midlands hospital. Three decades after their deaths, a woman claiming the identity of one of the twins was caught in a social security crackdown.

Officers checked their records on thousands of people applying for passports and discovered that a death certificate had been issued in the case of

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Right to Work: Radical scheme to save £5bn a year

Workfare plan to cut jobless

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

A Right to Work Bill, aimed at ending involuntary unemployment over three years, was launched yesterday by the cross-party alliance of Frank Field, Labour chairman of the Commons Social Security Committee, and Sir Ralph Howell, the Conservative MP for North Norfolk, a long-time advocate of "workfare" style schemes.

The package would reduce Government spending by £5bn a year, they claimed, while putting the jobless to work with a series of incentives linked to draconian benefit cuts for those who chose not to take part.

Under the scheme, both public and private employers would be paid £50 a week for adults – and £30 a week for 16- and 17-year-olds – to take on the jobless, provided they matched those sums to produce wages of £120 and £60 a week.

Those not employed under such a Workstart scheme would

be offered employment under a new Right to Work, undertaking caring, environmental or minor infrastructure schemes in place of their benefits. They would be paid £3 for every hour they made themselves available.

But the payments would replace existing unemployment and Income Support benefits – and those choosing not to join the Right to Work scheme would be entitled merely to £30 a week to live on, a quarter of the Right to Work payment, with no entitlement to housing benefit or any other benefits.

The Workstart scheme would create an additional 1 million jobs, Mr Field and Sir Ralph claim, the subsidy being halved in the second year. The Right to Work programme, which would be phased in over three years, starting with the under-25s, then those aged up to 30, and then those nearest to retirement age, would see the state become the permanent "employer of last resort" for at least some of the

2,250,000 unemployed who failed to find subsidised jobs. Both Mr Field and Sir Ralph accepted their Bill was far from perfect. Provisions to stop employers dismissing existing workers to take on subsidised ones are outlined only briefly, for example, and their dramatic claim of a £5bn saving makes no allowance for the capital and revenue needed to provide tools and supplies for environmental and infrastructure projects.

But Mr Field said its aim was to "attack the mindset which stems from the Treasury, that there is no alternative to their approach for running the economy". All other attempts to combat long-term unemployment had failed, he said, and a new national strategy was "long overdue".

The Bill is built around the ideas of Denis Snower, Professor of Economics at Birkbeck College, London, who argues it would lead to economic growth, at a fraction of the cost of unemployment benefits.

LABOUR'S SUMS DON'T ADD UP



Cash point: The Tory party chairman Dr Brian Mawhinney attacking Labour's tax plans yesterday Photograph: John Voos

Fox beats off the right-wing challenge at 1922 committee

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES
Political Correspondent

A right-wing offensive to snatch the chairmanship of the influential 1922 Tory backbench committee came to naught last night as the John Major loyalist Sir Marcus Fox beat off a challenge from the Dartford MP Bob Dunn.

Mr Dunn's fellow right-winger John Townend, a 1922 executive member and chairman of the backbench finance committee, likewise failed in a bid to be elected as one of the committee's two vice-chairmen.

While Sir Marcus is broadly on the "establishment" right, Mr Dunn, a former minister, is a hardline Thatcherite No Turning Back Group member. His "Get Dunn In" campaign was based on the argument that he would provide continuity on the committee at a time when nine of the party's grandees among the 18-strong executive are planning to retire from Parlia-

ment at the next election. However, the overall upshot of last night's annual elections leaves the political complexion of the executive unchanged, with MPs from the right-wing 92 Group still accounting for nearly two-thirds of the officers and members.

The only change to the executive was the exit of Sir Donald Thompson, and that was only by default because he failed to get his nomination papers in on time. He is replaced by the former armed services minister Sir Archie Hamilton.

Prominent members of the 92 Group, led by the chairman Sir

George Gardiner MP, had pressed unsuccessfully for a slate of fresher candidates who would be likely to figure in the next Parliament. But that strategy was thwarted.

It was the second year in succession that Sir Marcus, the MP for Shipley, has had to beat off a challenge. Last year he saw off Sir Nicholas Bonsor, now a junior minister, amid heavy criticism that he was too fond of relaying the views of the leadership to the backbenches, instead of transmitting the views and criticisms of MPs to the Government.

A number of MPs thought he

went too far when he warned that a Euro-rebellion could provoke a general election. There was further indignation after he offered the executive's endorsement of John Major in the summer leadership contest when two executive members, Mr Townend and David Evans, were backing John Redwood.

Sir Marcus said last night: "I am very mindful that over the next year the future of our party in government will be determined and I will do everything I possibly can to ensure that is brought about."

Mr Dunn said: "Naturally I am disappointed but of course it was an exercise in democracy. Both Marcus and I accept that this vote is healthy for the party. Now we are going to unite."

No 1922 chairman is thought to have ever vacated office voluntarily. By convention the votes cast are never revealed, but Sir Marcus was believed last night to have won comfortably.

The 1922 executive officers and members

Chairman: Sir Marcus Fox
Vice-Chairmen: Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Dennis J. Knight
Treasurer: Sir Giles Sturt
Secretary: Sir John Gifford
Executive members: Sir Robert Bagnall, Bob Dunn, Sir Tony Durant, David Sime, Sir Anthony Grant, Sir Archie Hamilton, Sir Kenneth Haynes, Sir Ian Lawrence QC, Sir Fergus Montgomery, Sir Michael Neuber, James Pansley, John Townend

MP wins chance to alter the clock

STEPHEN GOODWIN
Parliamentary Correspondent

The prospect of an end to adjusting your watch on crossing the Channel moved closer yesterday. After topping a ballot on backbench Bills, Tory John Butterfill announced he would introduce a "daylight saving" Bill to advance the clocks an hour.

Mr Butterfill said the police believed the change would save 660 deaths and serious injuries a year and cut £250m a year from heating and lighting bills.

But the move to Central European Time, with "double summer time", has a downside. Postal workers and others who work outdoors face darker mornings and in Scotland in winter the sun would not be up until nearly 10am.

Mr Butterfill, MP for Bournemouth West, said he would accept an amendment so that Scotland could stay on the present Greenwich Mean time-British Summer time system.

However, while the Bill stands a fair chance of success, the idea of two time zones within the United Kingdom, playing havoc with timetables, is unlikely to appeal to many.

Mr Butterfill's name was first up in the annual ballot of backbench MPs to introduce a private member's Bill. Twenty names were drawn but the constraints of parliamentary time mean only about half a dozen are likely to reach the statute book, and only then if they are not too controversial.

Two years ago MPs voted by 103 votes to 96 in favour of a Bill to advance the clocks but the parliamentary timetable meant it made no progress.

During the Second World War clocks were changed four times a year to maximise daylight. Double summer time was tried 25 years ago but it was dropped after a number of children were killed in Scotland on their way to school.

Second in the ballot was Alan Meale, Labour MP for Mansfield. He said he will study material sent to him by different groups before making up his mind on his proposed Bill.

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news

Doctors
set to
prescribe
aerobic
classes

JOJO MOYES

The hypochondriac – scourge of doctor's waiting rooms everywhere – may soon be prescribed advanced aerobics instead of antibiotics, following the launch of a scheme yesterday in which fitness programmes will be available on prescription.

The Wright Foundation Medical Referral Programme aims to bring together doctors and fitness experts to provide people with medically prescribed fitness programmes at their local leisure centres.

Patients with "prescriptions" will be able to use fitness facilities under supervision by specially trained fitness experts and at half the normal price.

"The medical professional will be putting in a prescription, as we call it, which contains patient details that the referral consultant has to take into consideration," said Murdo Wallace, chairman and founder of the Wright Foundation, which masterminded the scheme. "We set it up because we realised that doctors were hesitant to send people on fitness programmes because they didn't have a medical basis."

More than 100 leisure centres across the country have already applied to have staff trained as "referral programme consultants". By the time the courses begin next April, the foundation is hoping that 400 leisure centres will take part, following the success of a pilot scheme in Bournemouth.

"The pilot scheme began two years ago and there are currently 534 people referred there. It is now funded by the Dorset Health Commission who completely endorse it," Mr Murdo said.

Mr Murdo said that although paying for people to attend fitness classes might appear expensive in the short term, "Patients become less dependent on expensive medication so they're cutting down on the drugs bill," he said. He added that it could help relieve ailments from depression to cardiovascular problems.

Endgame in bitter chess battle



Pawns in the game: Garry Kasparov (left), who set up a rival chess association; Florencio Campomanes (centre) who has stepped down as president of Fide, and Anatoly Karpov

WILLIAM HARTSTON
Chess Correspondent

Crisis in Fide: Colourful president resigns after vote of no-confidence

Florencio Campomanes, president of the International Chess Federation (Fide) for 17 turbulent years, has resigned his post after a motion of no confidence was passed against him "and his whole team" at a meeting of the Fide Central Committee in Paris.

With his colourfully autocratic style, the 68-year-old Filipino had led Fide into some of the greatest crises in its history, yet his political skills had always in the past seemed to thrive on the storms and disputes he created. This time, however, he has been brought down by his efforts to do a deal with the rival Professional Chess Association and its leader, Garry Kasparov, the former Fide world champion.

The battles began in 1985 when Campomanes abruptly terminated Kasparov's world championship match against Anatoly Karpov after the com-

batants had been at each other's throats for five-and-a-half months. Convinced that Campomanes was robbing him of a chance to win the title, Kasparov declared war against the Fide president.

The sniping between them continued until 1993 when Kasparov, whose anti-Fide stance had not been supported by his fellow grandmasters, found an unlikely ally in England's Nigel Short, who was his official world championship challenger. Short's gripe with Fide in general and Campomanes in particular lay in a belief that he was being short-changed in their decision to accept a bid from Manchester to stage the title match. The prize money was far less than Short had been led to expect. So he contacted Kasparov and suggested they take their custom elsewhere.

The result was the formation of the PCA, the expulsion of

both Short and Kasparov from Fide, and the creation of two world championship titles. Between 1993 and 1995, the PCA and Fide ran parallel world championship eliminators. Kasparov defended his title a month ago against the young Indian challenger, Viswanathan Anand, while Anatoly Karpov, who had recaptured the Fide title, faced a challenge from the American, former Russian, Gata Kamsky. At this stage, Campomanes comes back into the story.

At the end of 1994, his fourth term as Fide president was coming to a close and he had announced that he would not seek re-election. At the Fide congress in Moscow last December, he changed his mind and had his name again added to the ballot paper. His candidacy was supported in a stirring speech by Garry Kasparov, who said: "If Campomanes wants to

stay four more years, I would support him."

Their joint platform was built on an agreement to reunify the two world titles. The schism was damaging to both organisations: the PCA lacked the credibility of backing by the world governing body; Fide lacked the support of the strongest player in the world. So Campomanes was re-elected, and that is when the problems got worse.

While the PCA championship cycle proceeded smoothly, the Fide version ground to an unexpected halt after Kamsky and Karpov qualified for the final. Yet Campomanes, who had shown considerable skill in the past in finding multi-million-dollar sponsors for world title matches, was making no apparent effort to secure backing for the Karpov-Kamsky match.

While full details of the Campomanes-Kasparov deal were never published, one major component had been the promise of a unifying match for the world championship in 1996. Yet the delay in organising Karpov-Kamsky brought accusations that the Fide cycle was being quietly forgotten. Both Karpov and Kamsky wrote furious open letters to Campomanes, Karpov accusing him of acting like "God and Tsar", while Kamsky accused him of being an ally of Kasparov in the latter's efforts "to prevent the Karpov-Kamsky match".

In September 1995, a letter was delivered to Fide headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland, signed by 61 delegates from member nations, calling for an extraordinary general meeting. Campomanes negotiated, and managed to have it downgraded to an ordinary general meeting, but a motion of no-confidence in him was still on the agenda. So was a report on alleged irregularities during

Campomanes's re-election in Moscow.

The no-confidence motion was passed, by 14 votes to 12, at a preliminary meeting of the central committee. It still had to be formally confirmed by the General Assembly, but this time his opponents seemed to have done their homework well. Another surprise report, on the state of Fide finances, sealed his fate. The figures supported allegations that the president's high level of spending was more than the organisation could afford.

Without waiting for another vote, Campomanes resigned. Soon after, it was announced that the Karpov-Kamsky match for the Fide championship will take place in Montreal.

The American grandmaster Larry Evans, a veteran anti-Campomanes campaigner, summed it all up: "Every figure in history gets about one defining sentence. For Campomanes the defining sentence will be 'They kicked him out'."

Scare
tactics
ditched
in drugs
battle

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

A glossy guide to taking illegal drugs safely and a national helpline offering advice on any aspect of drug use are key elements in a Government initiative which has abandoned the "scare tactics" of previous campaigns.

The £14m three-year campaign, launched just a week after the death of Leah Betts, who took a single Ecstasy tablet, marks a new pragmatism in dealing with the escalating problems of drug abuse among teenagers.

Young people who are considering taking drugs will have access to "all the information at hand to make an informed decision," according to the first issue of *D-Mag*, which provides straightforward facts about drugs, their health risks, and first aid advice.

David Arnold, director of the drugs publicity campaign, which is being run by the Health Education Authority, said drug-taking was not glamourised or condoned by the magazine.

"This campaign acknowledges the positive beliefs about drugs but strongly counters this with facts about health risks. There is a serious level of ignorance," said Mr Arnold.

Preliminary findings from a HEA survey of 5,000 children and young people across the country, aged between 11 and 24, show that more than 60 per cent regard health risks as the most important reason to stop taking drugs. A further 31 per cent said they did not know any of the health risks involved with Ecstasy, and a further 42 per cent knew nothing of the hazards of taking LSD.

The 24-hour helpline, which offers free and confidential advice to callers, was "essential" to the success of the new campaign, Mr Arnold said. "Getting [the helpline number] in front of every young person and their parents is the main purpose of today's launch."

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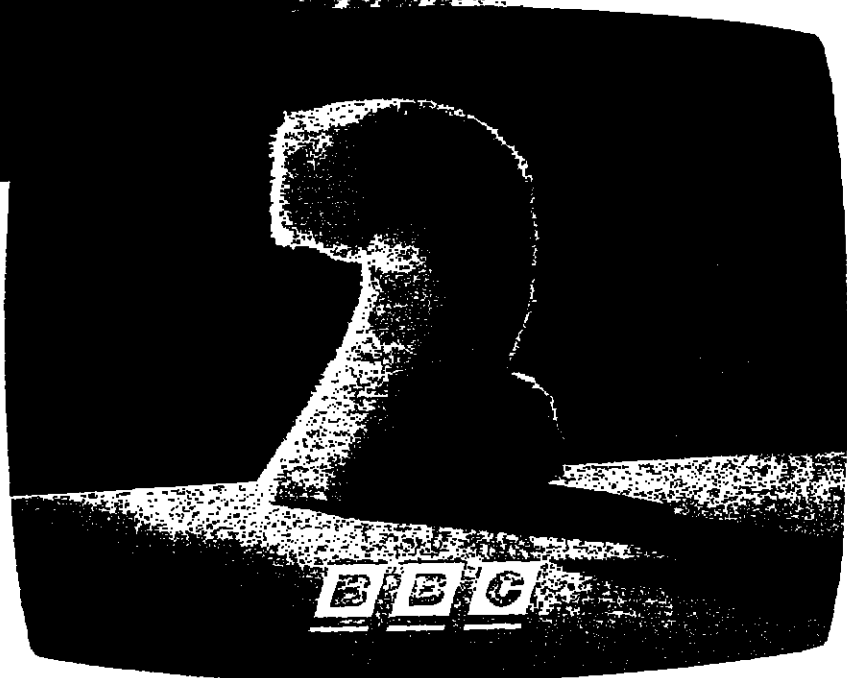
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news

Leeson returns to face justice in Singapore

STEPHEN VINES

Nick Leeson, the man who is alleged to have brought down Barings bank with his rogue futures trading, has returned to Singapore as he left - travelling business class, accompanied by his wife Lisa - but this time they were joined by two lawyers and three security officers.

He fought extradition to Singapore for almost nine months but finally volunteered to return and to apologise for claims that he would not be able to get a fair trial in the republic.

It was typical of Mr Leeson that he sought trial in Britain rather than Singapore. His two years in the republic were spent with hard-working, hard-drinking expatriates who got to know little of the country. They would instinctively believe that British justice was better than that offered by Singapore.

They have a point. Singaporean judges are not known for leniency. "Compassion went out of the window a long time ago, now I deliver justice," said Chief Justice Yong Pung-how in a recent judgment.

Compassion may be in short supply but last month's publication of Singapore's independent inspectors report into the Barings collapse made it clear they would not simply blame Mr Leeson for the debacle.

Lawrence Ang, the director

of Singapore's Commercial Affairs Department (CAD), specialists in financial crime, has said that if Leeson offered to co-operate with his team he saw no reason not to accept the offer.

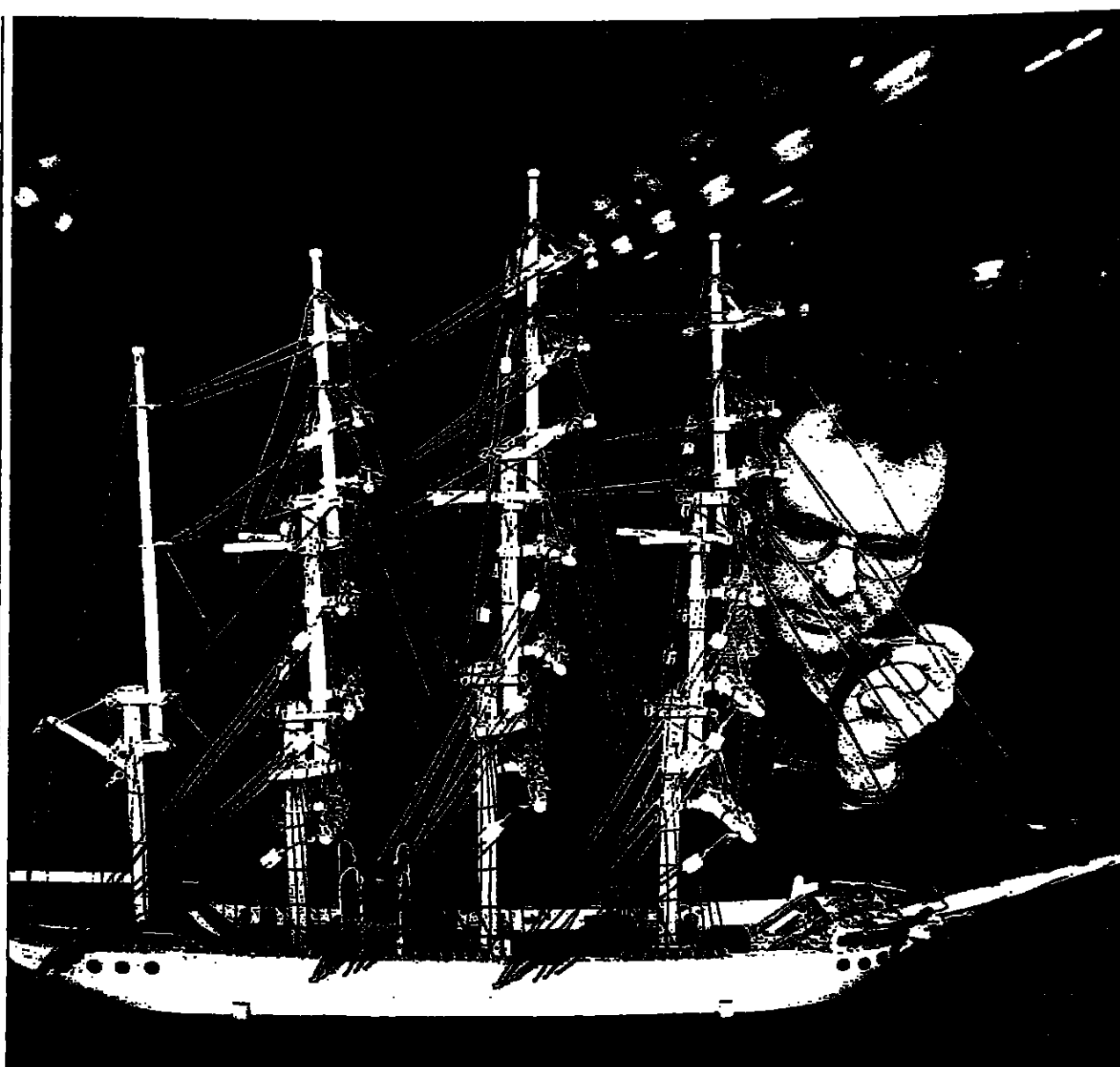
Mr Leeson will appear in a district court this morning where details will be given of all or some of the 11 fraud, forgery and deception charges he faces.

The district court cannot impose sentences exceeding 14 years. Any sentence exceeding five years would mean detention in one of Singapore's four tough maximum security prisons.

Some Singaporean legal experts believe that Mr Leeson could escape with less than five years in jail if the authorities believe that he has made a significant contribution to the conviction of senior Barings officials who are named in the report as having lied to the investigators and attempted to cover up the bank's problems.

The most vulnerable official is James Bax, the former managing director of Barings Asia Pacific. He has been questioned by CAD and remains in Singapore with his passport withheld.

Mr Bax's boss in London, Peter Norris, the chief executive of Barings Investment bank, is even more heavily criticised in the report. However, he is in London and would need to be extradited to face charges in Singapore.



Getting shipshape: In anticipation of the Tall Ships Race arrival in 1999, Vincent Gillen, of the McClean Museum in Greenwich, Strathclyde, restores a model of the Snagow by J Mcvey, from an 1890 ship built in Port Glasgow

Human link with mad cow disease to be tested

TOM WILKIE
Science Editor

Bits of brain taken from dairy farmers who recently died of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease - the human equivalent of mad cow disease - are being injected into laboratory mice in what scientists hope may be a definitive experiment to show whether BSE can spread to humans.

Brains from infected cattle have already been "passed" through mice which catch the murine (mouse) equivalent. According to Dr Sheila Gore, from the Institute of Public Health in Cambridge, tissue infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy produces a distinctive pattern of damage to the mouse brains. She said: "If that pattern were seen when material from brains of CJD farmers is used it would suggest very strongly that BSE had come into humans. It would prove the link."

Public concern about a possible link between the bovine and the human diseases has recently been heightened following the deaths of four farmers and two young people from CJD. But it will take at least two years before the results of the experiments in mice are known.

In an article published in today's issue of the *British Medical Journal*, Dr Gore warns that the "cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in farmers and young adults are more than happenstance. They signal an epidemiological alert to investigate intensively possible exposures - farm related and dietary."

Dr Gore said yesterday: "There is some urgency to this. It would be negligent if we did not follow these things up." She stressed, however, that she was not saying humans had been infected. "We don't have proof

that BSE has come into humans. We do have an unusually high number of occurrences in people who have worked with adult cattle so that we want to look at occupational exposures."

Cows are believed to have caught BSE by eating cattle meal infected with sheep scrapie, following changes around 1982 in the way the rendering industry treated offal and other wastes.

From the first certified case in 1986 to the middle of this year, the disease has been confirmed in more than half of dairy herds and 15 per cent of beef suckler herds. Dairy farmers are therefore at risk of occupational exposure to the agent that causes the disease, if BSE is transmissible to humans.

Dr Gore added: "I don't know what the dairy farmer source may be. Farmers do apparently eat cattle cake - it's rich in protein." If farmers did eat cattle cake in the early 1980s it would have been contaminated with BSE infected material. Dr Gore pointed out that the incidence of CJD is much higher among dairy farmers than it is for farmers as a whole and that this is true not just in Britain but in other European countries.

It is possible that these countries have had infected but not affected cattle - calves exported from the UK for veal for example might be infected but would be slaughtered before the disease became apparent.

Dr Gore suggested that it would be worth studying CJD among farmers in countries such as the US, New Zealand, and Australia where there has essentially been no incidence of BSE to see if the trend holds that there is a higher incidence among dairy farmers than for farmers as a whole.

Driver in stupor killed cyclist

A disqualified driver in a drunken stupor ran down and killed a cyclist 10 days after being released from prison for his third drink-driving offence, a court was told yesterday.

Brendon Cheshire was so drunk he was not fit to be interviewed until nearly 24 hours after the crash.

Cheshire has numerous previous convictions dating back to his teens for dangerous driving, driving without insurance, failing to give breath specimens, and 14 offences of driving while disqualified, the Old Bailey heard.

Jailing Cheshire, 35, of Barking, Essex, for six years, Judge Brian Capstick told him: "There are clear aggravating features in this case, there is drink, there is failure to stop and there is your previous record."

Cheshire had drunk nearly a bottle of whisky and was three and a half times over the legal limit for driving when he knocked David Stoten from his bicycle as he tried to overtake him on a flyover in Barking in August, said Lindsay Burn, for the prosecution.

Witnesses heard the screech of tyres and a bang and found 35-year-old Mr Stoten, who had said goodnight to his fiancée moments before and was cycling to his home, lying in the road by his smashed bicycle.

Cheshire had not stopped but was arrested outside a block of flats near by. Residents had called police after they saw his car, its windscreen smashed, mount the pavement. They saw him stagger from it, too drunk to walk properly.

When officers arrived Cheshire was slumped in the driving seat, too drunk to stand up by himself. "I have had an accident," he told police who saw his eyes were glazed, his speech slurred and his answers incoherent.

Cheshire had left prison determined not to drink but when he found out his girlfriend and the mother of his child wanted no more to do with him he started again.

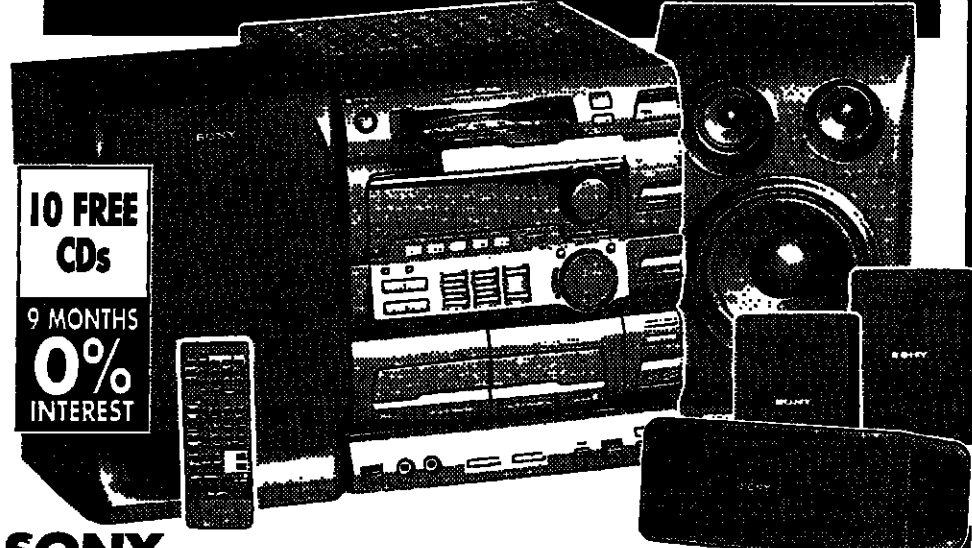
His counsel, Joseph Giret, said Cheshire deeply regretted the accident which still haunted him. Cheshire admitted causing death by dangerous driving, driving while disqualified and without insurance.

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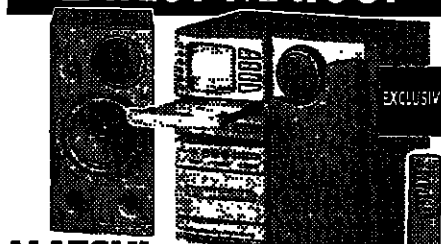
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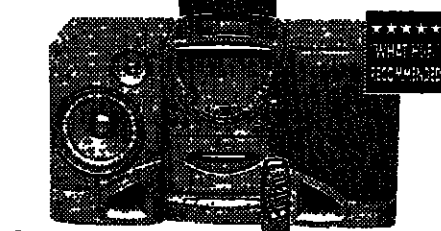


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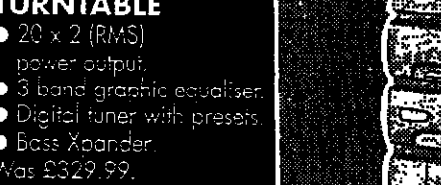


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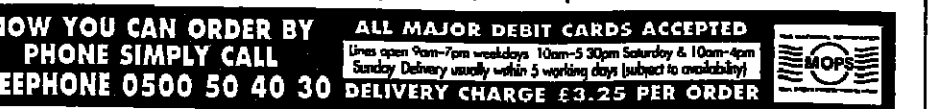


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DAILY POEM

'Damp white imprints ...'

By Yevgeny Yevtushenko
(translated by Anthony Kahn)

Damp white imprints dog the feet;
snowbound trolley, snowbound street.
Her tip of glove to lip and cheek,

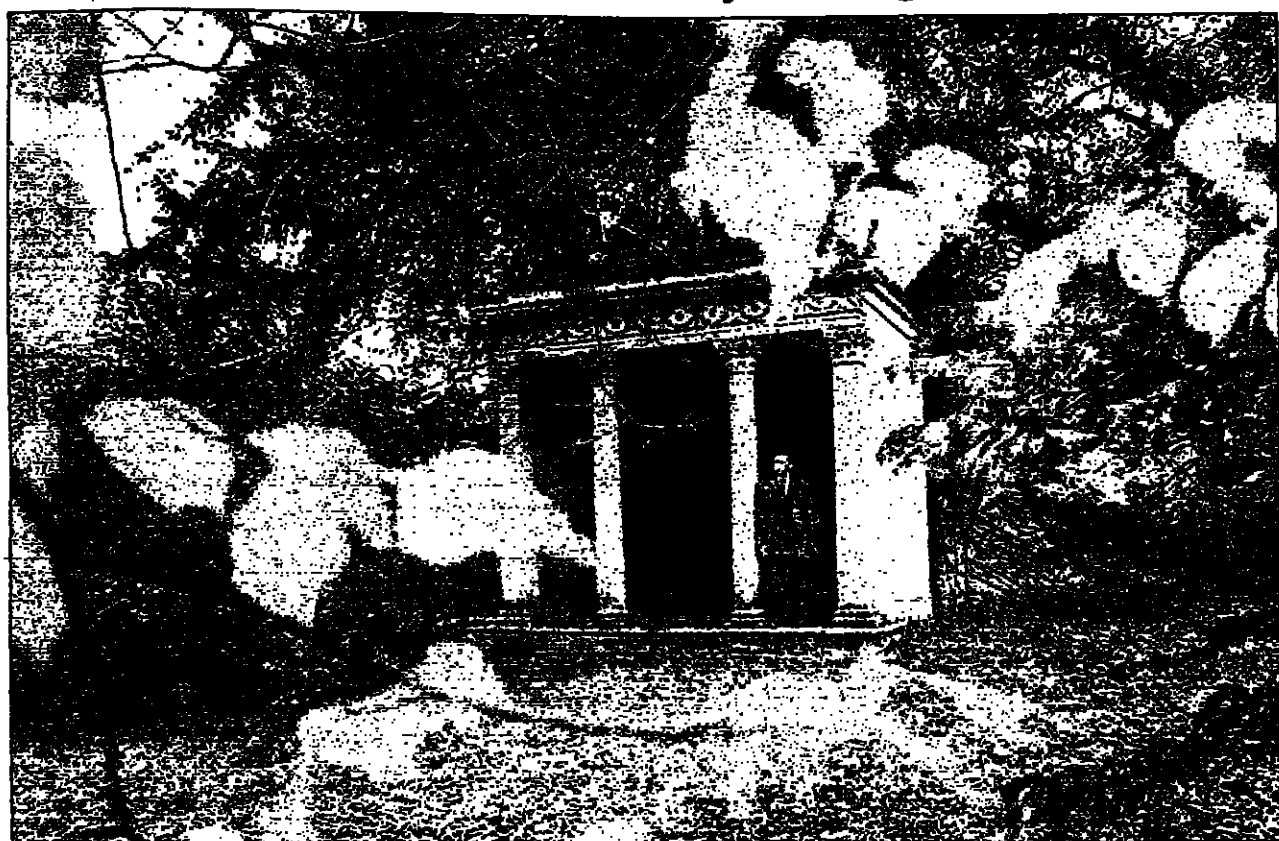
"Good-bye." Go.
Deaths, into soaring snow
and stillness, as expected, go,
A turn:

the plunge into the metro.
A glare of lights. A melting hat.
I stand, am spun in drafts, see black,
take the tunnel, train, and track,
sit and wait as others sat,
touch cold marble, chill my hand,
and, heavy-hearted, understand
that nothing ever really happened,
ever would, ever can.

Yevgeny Yevtushenko was born in Siberia in 1933. He has been an outspoken political activist throughout his life. A critic of Stalinism in the late Forties and early Fifties, his poetry became well known in the Soviet Union and was translated into 22 languages. He was a member of Soviet Parliament from 1988-91. Despite being a political writer, he is essentially a lyric poet, writing with great tenderness about the human condition. This Saturday, as part of the Rewriting History Series, he will be giving a poetry reading at 7.30pm with Nayantara Sahgal in the Purcell Room, the South Bank Centre, London SE1. Box Office inquiries to 0171 960 4242.

0171 960 4242

Heritage and arts awards: Nearly £40m given for projects ranging from £4.9m for parkland to £1,500 for a memorial tablet



Classically inspired: Adam's island temple at Croom Park, Brown's first grand landscape Photograph: John Potter

Churches and Wales win top share of lottery cash

REBECCA FOWLER

The National Heritage Memorial Fund has given £4.9m of lottery money for the National Trust to buy Croom Park near Worcester, one of the country's finest landscaped gardens. It was one of 56 projects that benefited from the £13.7m worth of grants announced in Cardiff yesterday, many of which had a strong Welsh or ecclesiastical theme. A further £25m was handed out to 76 projects by the Arts Council.

The grants ranged from the £4.9m from the NHMF for the park and £6m from the Arts Council for a National Glass Museum in Sunderland, to £1,500 - the smallest the heritage fund has awarded so far - to St Andrew's church in Somerset for the restoration of a memorial tablet.

Despite its vocal opposition to

the National Lottery, the Church of England stands to be one of the greatest recipients of lottery money. Bath Abbey, which receives 300,000 visitors a year, was given £500,000 yesterday to clean the interior, and 18 grants were given to churches for bells, organs and rebuilding.

"I regard the introduction of the lottery as a fresh form of gambling, which slips us down the road of materialism a bit further," Prebendary Richard Askew, Rector of Bath Abbey, said. "But it exists and this is how the Government has decided to fund Britain's heritage. We who are the stewards of these buildings must face up to it and draw on funds so raised."

There was also a strong Welsh theme to the projects, which included a £372,000 grant to the National Trust to buy Hafod Garregog, a 169-hectare estate including the 15th-century house

of Owain Glyndwr, the last independent Prince of Wales.

The distributors of lottery money have been accused of concentrating funds in London and the South. Lord Rothschild, chairman of the Heritage Lottery Fund, which handles the grants for the NHMF, said that he was anxious the fund should increase its Welsh spending, currently £1.1m, although he said he was anxious not to create "theme-park Wales".

"Over time we wish to achieve a fair balance both geographically and by population," he said.

A £300,000 grant goes to the National Gallery in Scotland to buy a painting, the *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist and Attendant Angels* by Giulio Procaccini, which belonged to Charles I.

The HLF also published its annual report yesterday. So far

it has given £70m in grants: 26 per cent for land projects, 17 per cent for buildings, 24 per cent for museums and galleries, 19 per cent for manuscripts and archives and 13 per cent for industrial, maritime and transport.

Jack Cunningham, Labour's heritage spokesman, attacked the Government yesterday for taking too intrusive a role in the distribution of lottery money. In a letter to Virginia Bottomley, the Secretary of State for National Heritage, he criticised plans to use funds to foster a direct relationship between schools and artistic centres for excellence.

"While I have proposed the idea of a 'talent fund' from lottery proceeds ... I am concerned that ministers are becoming increasingly involved with the distribution of lottery proceeds towards specific projects of their own choice," Dr Cunningham said.

Trust to rescue first landscape by Capability Brown

CHRIS MOWBRAY

The birthplace of Britain's modern love affair with gardening, Croom Park in the Severn valley, brought international fame to the nation's greatest-ever landscape artist. Now the park, designed by Capability Brown in the second half of the 18th century, is to be restored by the National Trust over the next 10 years at a cost of £8m.

As the National Heritage Memorial Fund announced in Cardiff yesterday that it was giving £4.9m towards the project, officials of the trust's Severn region shunned the reception to get out and about on their new treasure in Wellington boots and Barbour jackets.

It was during the 1750s that the then unknown Lancelot Brown was retained by the sixth Earl of Coventry to turn 675 acres of Worcestershire marsh into a classical manicured landscape which set the standard for sweeping parklands across the country in the Georgian age.

The unusual partnership between the two men developed into a life-long friendship and created a new art form inspired by classical philosophy and the concept of the Grand Tour.

It also earned Brown his nickname. When reporting on how the work was progressing, the designer would regularly knock on his employer's door to tell him: "The park has its capabilities, my lord."

"This was Capability Brown's first great landscape park and it is of tremendous importance," David Brown the trust's regional public affairs manager, said. "It is also unusual because it

includes work by the architect Thomas Adam and the sculptor James Wyatt. Here you have something which combines the work of the three finest artists of the late 18th century.

"It has altered little since it was created except that it has decayed and was ravaged by Dutch elm disease in the Seventies. We intend to restore it totally and will be opening it so that the public can see the work taking shape."

The centrepiece of the park is Brown's mile-long artificial river, which is really a man-made lake. The land also includes his grotto to Sabrina, the goddess of the River Severn, made with some of the earliest artificial garden stone.

Other features include a man-made island, two classical temples designed by Robert Adam and the statue of a druid and a memorial to Brown by James Wyatt.

The trust's regional director, Cecil Pearce, said: "This is a wonderful opportunity to restore a unique creation. Brown carried out the work only for the Earls of Coventry, but we are doing it for the nation - that is why we find it so exciting."

The park is being bought from the Sun Alliance, which has owned it since 1981 and is giving £300,000 towards the restoration. The house itself, Croom Court, is empty. Owned now by a property developer, it is on the market and is not part of the package.

The estate was sold off and the Coventry family moved out in 1948. The 11th earl, known locally as "Bill", still lives near by and walks regularly on the land.

Puttnam sees a grim future for London

MATTHEW BRACE

London will slip into cultural obscurity and social decay unless radical changes are made in the next few years, City campaigners warned a conference on the capital's future yesterday.

Speaking at the Royal Geographical Society in central London, the environmentalist and film producer Sir David Puttnam painted a grim picture of London in the next century, overtaken culturally by other world centres and plagued by a general malaise among its population.

To avoid such a fate, he said, London's 85 MPs urgently need to form a caucus to debate and drive change, not least in trying to establish it as Europe's arts capital.

"London seems unable to display any form of confidence and unless we get it back in the near future the result will be the most distressing, upsetting thing I can imagine," he said.

He added that the millennium and its associated festivals and events would be vital for London's future, promising an estimated 100 million tourists.

"The millennium is not just a chance for London, but its last chance," he said. "But I can only think that for the Government, the 31st of December that year is just a date for a fireworks festival."

Sir David also said that for far too long Londoners had put up with inadequacies in their services and surroundings. "For years people have commuted to and from work in appalling conditions but they never complain. Why not stage a one-day strike when everyone refuses to come to work unless things improve?" he suggested.

"And the year after, a two-day strike, and so on until something gets done."

Also speaking at the conference, and equally critical of the state of London and concerned for its future, was the architect Sir Richard Rogers, who reiterated his blueprint for a 21st century London for the public, with pedestrianised squares and streets, plush public transport, and a revitalised river Thames.

His plans include more bridges across the river, the planting of a million trees to reforest the Embankment, and increased river transport.

"The public need somewhere to meet, they want somewhere to meet, we should be giving them places to meet," he said. His main attack was on the car, saying the average speed in London is now 10mph, the same as it was 100 years ago.

Also on the conference agenda was how the capital will survive as a financial world centre and how it is to be governed locally in the next millennium.

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international

Diana in Argentina: Public remain indifferent to 'ambassador' and sceptical of President Menem's motives for the trip



Doing it her way: The Princess of Wales went about her charitable visits soon after her arrival in Argentina yesterday

PHIL DAVISON
Buenos Aires

If she thought she was going to fly away from it all, the Princess of Wales was mistaken. When she settled into her first-class British Airways seat for an overnight flight to Buenos Aires, the in-flight TV news review concentrated on one theme only - her BBC interview.

Journalists, kept at a distance by the Princess's detectives, said they were not sure whether she watched. She appeared to take a tablet, possibly a sleeping pill, and dozed during most of the 13-hour flight, they said.

She had to. After a quick wash and brush-up at the British Embassy, she was straight into her first appointment, patting disabled youngsters' heads at a paralysis centre and chatting to victims of road, rugby and swimming accidents.

The Princess had flown into Ezeiza international airport, then on by helicopter to the capital's military airport. She was no doubt unaware that it was at that airport, around the time she was courting Prince Charles, that Argentine Air Force planes used to load anti-government suspects, "drugged like zombies", before tossing them out alive over the mouth of the river Plate.

Ghosts of Falklands haunt Princess's visit

Insisting that her visit is about charity, she may also be unaware that this nation's President, Carlos Menem, who will host a lunch for her at his official residence today, is being widely accused here of trying to garner near-royal powers for himself. He is currently trying to push through measures that would allow him to bypass Congress and rule by decree on key issues such as tax reform and privatisation of industries.

The Princess looked relaxed

better ask the Argentine Foreign Ministry about that," said a British diplomat here. His remark appeared to confirm a widely held belief here that the Argentine government proposed, organised and financed the trip, although the Princess was ostensibly invited by the Infant Paralysis Association she visited yesterday. The theory implied that Mr Menem wanted the Princess here to push his rapprochement with Britain, partly in the hope of

ambassador, this was possibly the wrong place to start. "The Malvinas [Falklands] defeat is a scar that will never heal," said Daniel Antonio, who runs a corner store next to the clinic the Princess visited. "It was our Hiroshima. We'll never forget."

An opposition senator, Luis Leon, went further. "This national fawning over the visit gives prestige to a monarchy that has taken the lives of our young people to preserve a colonialism that usurped our territory," he said.

Local reporters said Argentine Air Force helicopters had been enlisted to ferry the Princess to and from the presidential helicopter, offered by Mr Menem, carried the name "Malvinas Argentinas" (Argentine Falklands) on the sides. There had been talk of covering the name with a sticker but it was feared the rotor blades would blow them off and embarrass the Princess, the reporters said.

Overall, though, the Princess was met with indifference. "No me va ni me viene" (I don't care one way or the other) was the most common response. A few dozen people had assembled outside the clinic yesterday but most were curious neighbours and they were far outnumbered by journalists.

'The Malvinas is a scar that will never heal. It was our Hiroshima'

as she was greeted at the military airport by the mayor of Buenos Aires, Jorge Domínguez, and driven off in a new V12 Jaguar. The Jag and a twin model for the British ambassador, Sir Peter Hall, carried the diplomatic plates of the embassy. But their registration discs gave the show away. They had been imported from Chile especially for her visit. The ambassador normally drives a Rover.

The cars, the first-class tickets for her and her staff, and the general costs of her stay, raised the question of who exactly was footing the bill. "You'd

showing that he is making progress in his pledge to regain the Falkland Islands.

President Menem, whose own love life - complete with a divorce and an illegitimate child - has often fed the gossip columns, will be host at a lunch for the Princess today. Tomorrow she flies to Patagonia to go whale-watching and take tea with the descendants of Welsh settlers.

She flies home on Sunday to face the music with Buckingham Palace for revealing the secret life of Britain's royals.

If the Princess hopes to make a career as a kind of goodwill

EU to slash farmers' aid before expanding east

KATHERINE BUTLER
Brussels

The European Union is considering sweeping new changes to its farm policy to prepare the EU for expansion to include former Communist states in Central and Eastern Europe.

New cuts in the support given to Europe's 9 million farmers are outlined in a draft of a long-awaited white paper on enlargement strategy, prepared by the EU Agriculture Commissioner, Franz Fischler.

The proposals are certain to provoke hostility from the big farming lobbies, particularly in France and Germany.

The draft says that to expand eastward without scaling down the £30bn-a-year Common Agriculture Policy will cause an explosion in spending and a return to the notorious grain and beef mountains and milk lakes of the early Eighties. Earlier reforms of the CAP have removed these surpluses and brought EU farm prices in line

with, or in some cases below, world market levels. The fear is that eastward expansion could renew the cycle of over-production. Agriculture is important to the economies of Eastern Europe, where a quarter of the workforce is employed on the land. If the status quo is retained, the annual cost to taxpayers would rise by £8bn-12bn, draft plans say.

The proposals will go before EU heads of government when they meet in Madrid next month. They suggest that the 10 former Communist states hoping for membership by the turn of the century should be made to wait several years after joining before being allowed to take advantage of the CAP's generous support.

During the transition period they would get extensive aid to revamp their decrepit farms as well as a gradual opening-up of EU agricultural markets to their exports. The paper steers clear of specifying how long the delay would last.

Regardless of enlargement, Mr Fischler says deeper CAP reform is inevitable because of internal budgetary pressures and world trade liberalisation. The warning is intended to head off a row between fierce critics of the farm policy, such as Britain, and its stalwart supporters, including France and Ireland, which could block the entire enlargement process.

Price cuts, he says, could continue to be compensated for by direct payments to farmers introduced in the 1992 round of reforms, but would be limited to "where necessary".

The CAP which is a bureaucratic nightmare to run because of its complexity and red tape, would also be simplified.

The paper also suggests replacing the annual springtime price-fixing haggle with a US-style five-year support programme. Brussels would devolve control over running the policy to national governments, including responsibility for some direct income supports.

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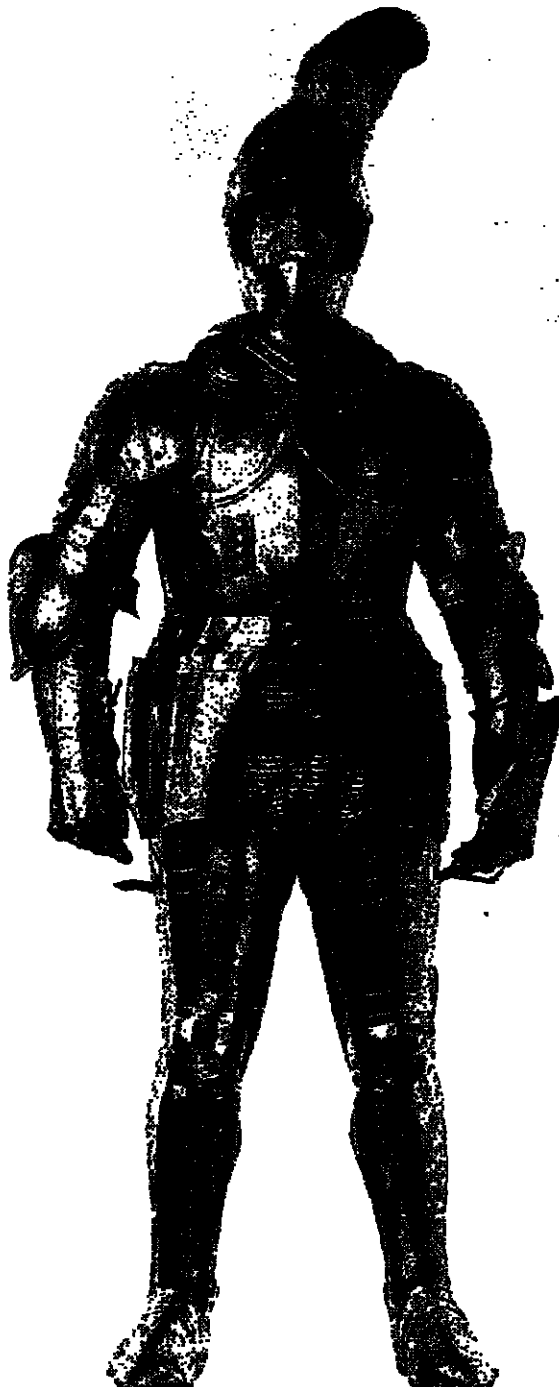


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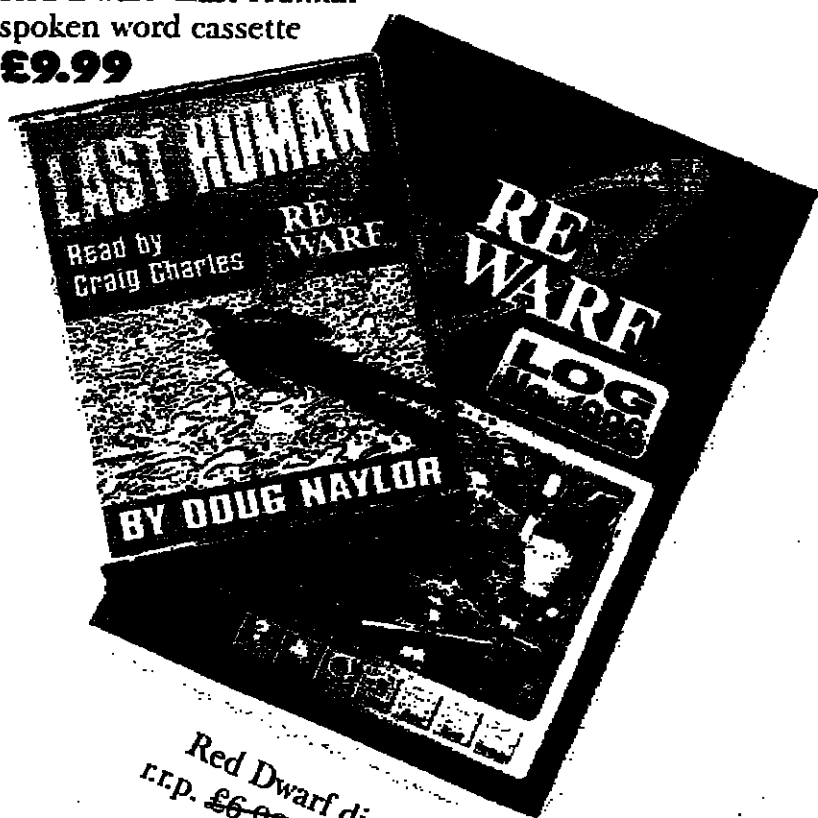
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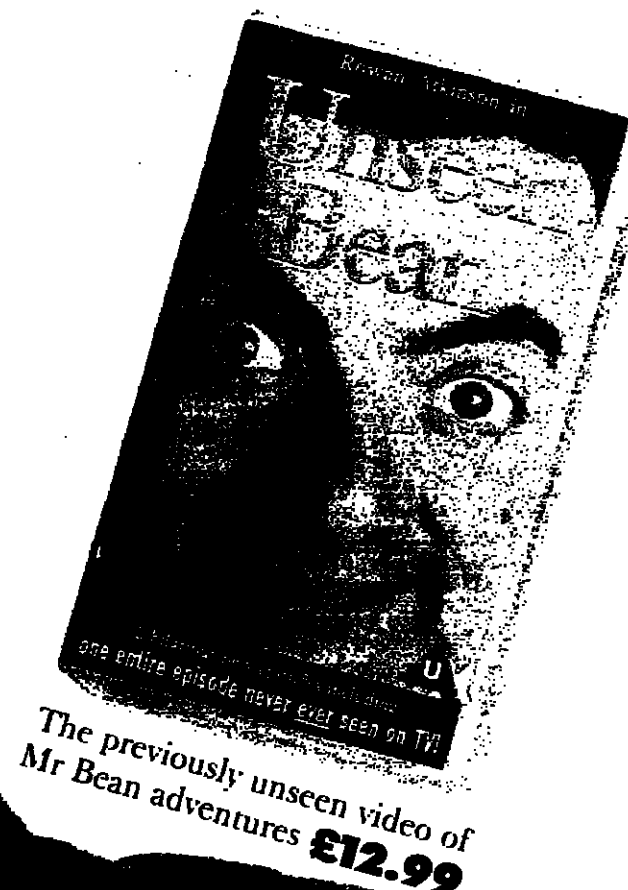
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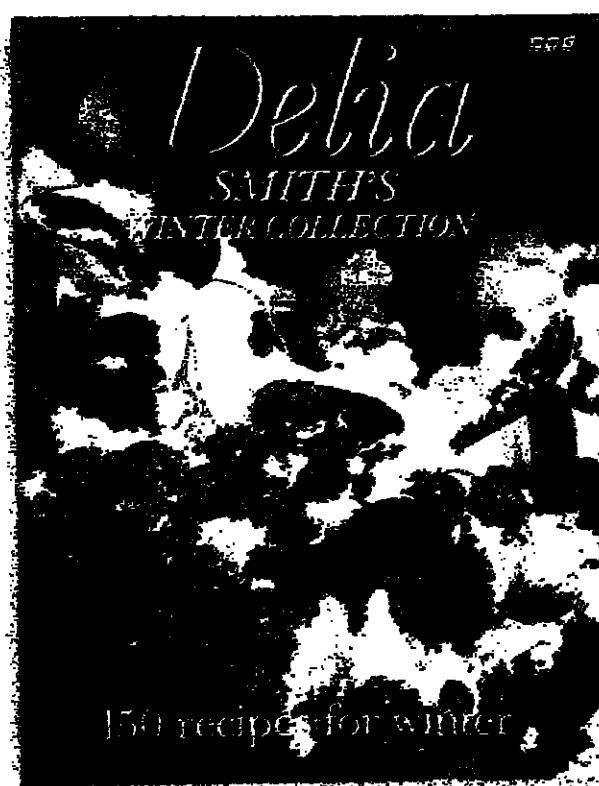
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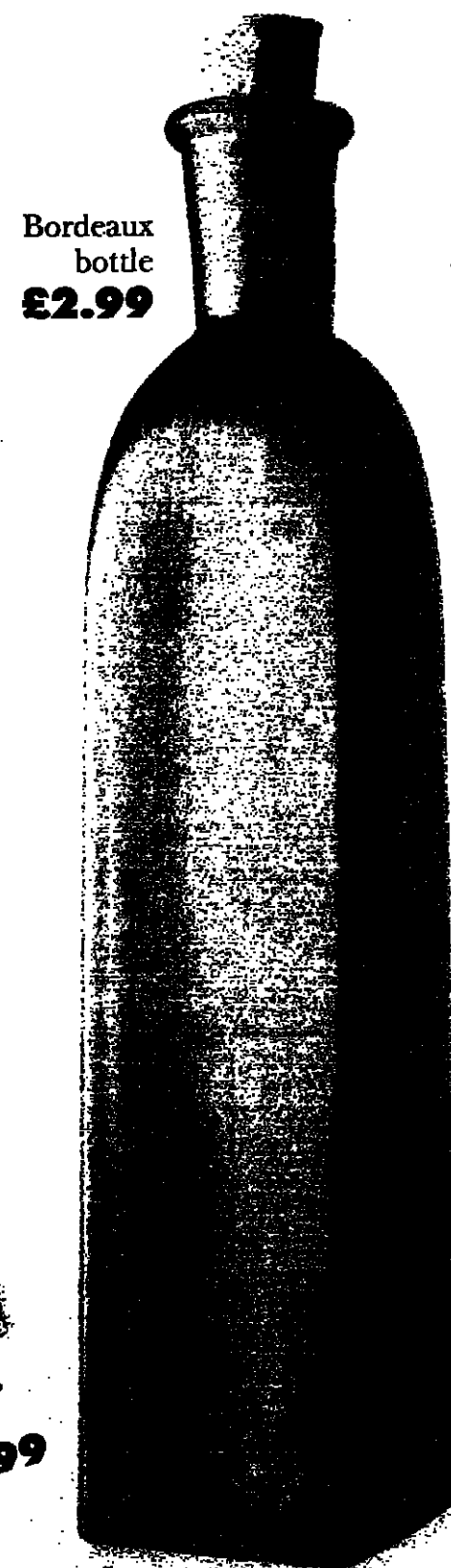


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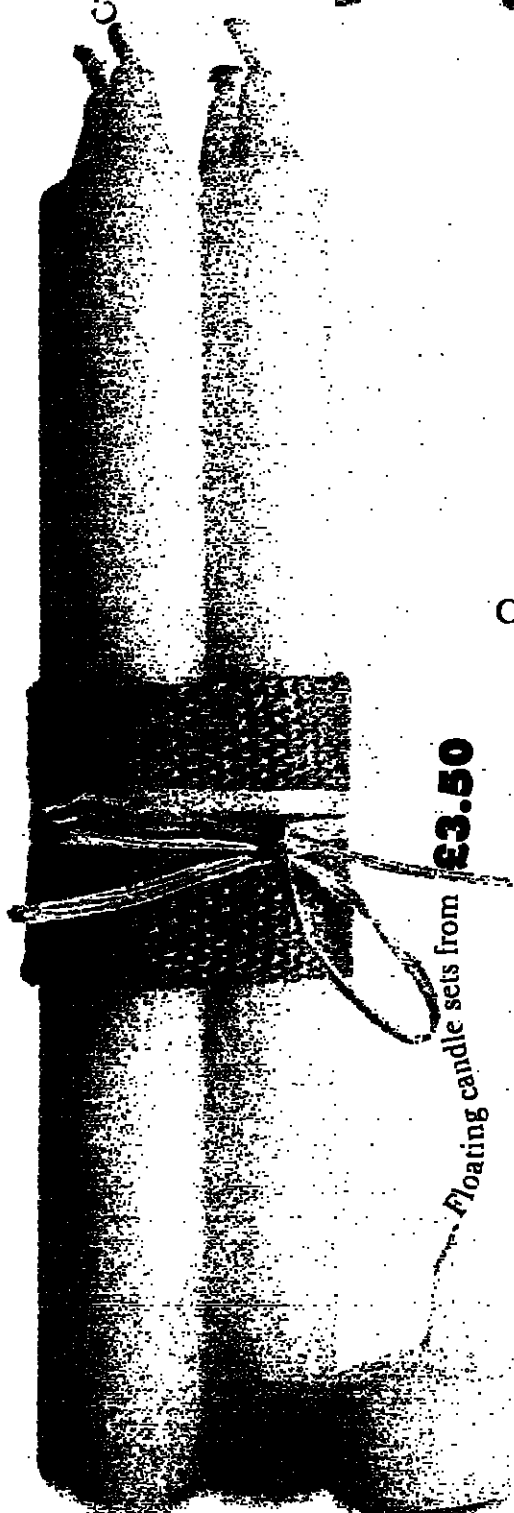
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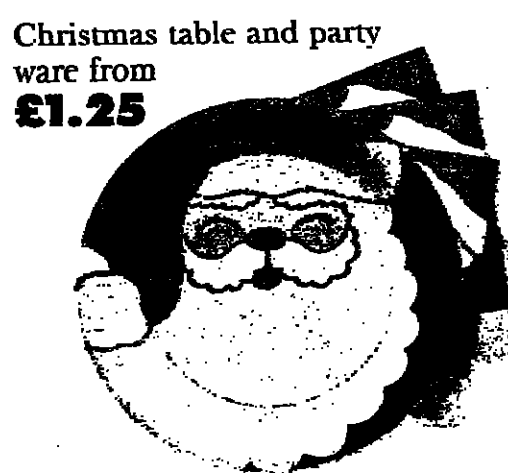
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Papandreou's progress: Nation waits anxiously as hopes rise for recovery from pneumonia and Pasok dissidents remain silent



Better days: Andreas Papandreou with Mimi, whose political role has upset some Pasok members. Photograph: Reuters

Heirs gather to fight for Greek succession

ANDREW GUMBEL
Athens

Three days after the frail and ageing Andreas Papandreou was rushed to hospital to be treated for pneumonia, doctors and close confidants said yesterday they were cautiously optimistic that he would pull through even though he was still in intensive care and struggling to wean himself off an artificial respirator.

With the whole country anxiously following the Prime Minister's progress, every kind of rumour has swirled around Athens about the state of his health and the possible political consequences of his incapacitation or demise. But yesterday his aides were busy discussing contingency plans for nothing more serious than a long convalescence.

"I would bet that the old lion will make it," said a senior member of Mr Papandreou's entourage.

Official bulletins, although short on hard information, registered a steady improvement in the 76-year-old premier's condition, and officials at the Onassis Cardiac Surgery Centre said they thought the Prime Minister

could be off the respirator and back home within a week or 10 days.

Even if he does pull through, however, Mr Papandreou's political future looks to be in grave doubt. Even before this latest emergency, he was so frail he could not work for more than a few hours a day and avoided all but the most important public functions. He underwent a triple heart bypass operation in 1988, and since then has grown ever

more wizened and slow. Ten days ago at a parliamentary meeting of his party Pasok, he barely had the strength to turn the pages of his speech.

Such is the power of Mr Papandreou's personality and the autocratic nature of his leadership that pressure for him to step down, or at least make provision for his succession, was for a long time articulated only by a handful of senior party dissidents too prominent to risk serious punishment.

Over the past two months, however, much of Pasok has been in open revolt over the Prime Minister's refusal to face up to his own physical frailty, and over the increasingly prominent political role played by his wife, Mimi. Before his hospitalisation, a powerful group of dissidents led by former ministers Vasso Papandreou, Theodoros Pangalos and Costas Siminis appeared to be making rapid progress in their campaign to democratise Pasok.

can only communicate through hand gestures and writing. It is more likely that the crisis is being managed by two close colleagues: Akis Tsochopoulos, the Interior Minister, who is the constitutional deputy for the premier, and Antonis Livanis, Mr Papandreou's Cabinet secretary, who has ministerial rank and carries responsibility for the secret services.

The position of Mr Livanis, who is also close to Mrs Papandreou, is particularly crucial because he has the power to convene the Cabinet at any time. Meanwhile the Foreign Minister, Karolos Papoulias, is expected to represent Greece at a meeting of Mediterranean leaders in Barcelona next month, and President Costis Stephanopoulos will probably attend the EU summit in Madrid.

The loyalists will no doubt keep the dissidents in check as long as Mr Papandreou is convalescing. But their grip is unlikely to last forever. If Mr Papandreou makes a full recovery, he can expect to face his critics all over again. If he remains too weak to carry on or dies, the struggle for succession will be more emotionally charged but no less vicious.

Even if he does pull through, his political future is in doubt

Vision of fun is blurred by bouncers

TOKYO DAYS

Why do foreigners in Japan get so wound up? This, after all, is the most crime-free country in the industrialised world. The streets are clean. The trains always run on time. You never have to tip and, apart from the odd typhoon and a few sticky weeks in the summer, the climate is mild and predictable. So why does it provoke the kind of frustrated loathing usually reserved for third-world dictatorships? Complaining about Japan (the expense, the language, the bureaucracy) makes up a good 50 per cent of expatriate conversations. There are even clinics for foreigners suffering from culture shock.

The other day I began to understand why. My particular epiphany was unexpected because it occurred at what should have been a jolly occasion. Blur, the reigning prince of British pop music, were playing in Tokyo, and I had tickets. "Bra", as they are called here, are big in Japan, and images of the band

The band bounced on and the entertainment began. My mate and I quickly abandoned our perch at the back, but no sooner had we found a vacant space lower down than the storm troopers were onto us, escorting us back up again.

For the rest of the evening we played cat and mouse in a simple effort to see the band. During one evasive action, we saw one of the suited Gestapo catch a transgressor. She was a schoolgirl, and she had been caught in possession of one of the unauthorised objects we had been warned about. The tone of the man who was barking at her suggested that this must be something serious: a knife perhaps, drugs? No. The object was a small disposable camera. "It's the first time, so we'll let you off," the guard told her. "I have committed a rudeness. I have committed a rudeness," said the girl, bowing repeatedly. She re-entered the auditorium, tears rolling down her cheeks.

On stage the sprightly Day Mon was also about to make a big mistake. "Ye-e-e-s. They're stereotypes. There must be more to life," he sang, clambering off the stage and towards the crowd. "All your life you're dreaming. Then you stop dreaming," he went on, offering the microphone to the front row. In an instant, eight security guards were on top of him, bundling him back on to the stage. Later he threw his hat into the audience. A hand shot up and caught it. The hand belonged to another steward.

After the show I went backstage and found a frowning Damon who revealed that the band would be fined for this behaviour. Penalties were also imposed for running over time — they gave too many encores. Bra wanted to have a good time. The girl with the camera wanted to have a good time. What was stopping us? Japan, more than any other country, attracts conspiracy theories. The conformity and homogeneity, the rules and bureaucracy, you will hear, are all part of a plot orchestrated by the Liberal Democratic Party/Ministry of Finance/Bank of Japan to keep the populace under its thumb. A book published last year seriously claimed that the reason cash-dispensing machines close so early in Japan (mid-afternoon at weekends) is to discourage people from spending, thus promoting savings and fuelling economic expansion with a ready supply of cheap money. Such academic paranoia is easy to push-poo. But in the Budokan I felt for the first time the presence of some great impersonal killjoy force, singularly devoted to snuffing out fun.

Richard Lloyd Parry



Day Mon: Fined for stepping out of line in Tokyo

and their lead singer Damon ("Day Mon") Albarn were plastered over my local record shop. In capital spirits, my friend and I took the subway to the opening concert at Budokan hall.

The Budokan is the country's most famous concert venue and the location of some of the most solemn state occasions. I was here in August for the 50th anniversary ceremony of the end of the war. Unsmiling men with heavy bulges in their jackets had scrutinised our IDs. But the security extended to the Emperor was nothing to that enjoyed by Bra. Steel barriers funnelled the crowd to the doors, scrutinised by megaphone-wielding stewards. "Unauthorised objects must not be brought into the hall," they warned. Inside, more officials bustled us to our seats in the back row of the upper circle behind a pillar. Even the front row was 10 yards from the stage. Patrolling this fenced-off no-man's-land were more of the fellows in suits. They were everywhere, crouching in the aisles to mop up anyone foolish enough to move out of their seats, inspecting the tickets of anything that moved.

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Searching for clues: A bomb disposal officer sifts for traces of the explosive device that killed one man and wounded three others yesterday in Karachi, Pakistan. Police said the bomb was planted in a motorcycle parked in the congested central financial district. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack. Photograph: Reuters

National shutdown: Unions challenge social security reforms

Public sector strike tests Chirac's resolve

MARY DEJEVSKY
Paris

France today faces a nationwide shut-down of public services and transport as six of the country's seven major trade unions stage a 24-hour strike against government plans to reform the health and social security system. The strike comes three days after a national student protest brought more than 100,000 on to the streets and conjures up visions of a winter of discontent that could severely test the resolve of President Jacques Chirac.

Early yesterday evening, air, sea and rail transport was already winding down across France. Today, no more than 20 per cent of services are guaranteed. Schools, hospitals, benefit offices, town halls, gas and electricity boards will all be affected, if not shut down altogether. There will be no national newspapers.

The strike was called last week after the Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, set out sweeping measures to overhaul the social security system, including a new tax designed to pay off the system's accumulated debt and an end to some of the fiscal advantages enjoyed by public sector employees.

Although trade union membership in France is low by European standards, it is high in the public sector, and most forecasts suggested that today's strike would be well supported.

Workers, whether unionised or not, see their right to a full pension after 37.5 years (compared with 40 years in the private sector) and certain tax

cutting plan expected to reduce branch lines, and staff. Hospitals face spending limits; the airlines want productivity improvements. All face a pay freeze in 1996. The social security reforms are the final straw.

Union leaders have their own reason to fear the reforms. They currently sit on the joint council - with employers' and

The French connection

Nine of 12 London-Paris Eurostar trains are expected to run and 10 in the return direction. Although cross-Channel ferries could be disrupted, those operated by British companies should be unaffected. The Shuttle is unaffected, but there will be no Motorail services. Air France says long-haul flights will operate normally, but only 20 per cent of short-haul flights can be guaranteed. The internal Air Inter flights are expected to be badly hit. Disruption of the high-speed train network will be extensive. In Paris, only 20 per cent of tube trains and

advantages threatened. Because average pay in the public sector is low, they fear that their living standards will be disproportionately affected by a new tax designed to pay off the social security system's debt as well as by the taxation of benefits.

Almost every branch of the public sector also has its own grievance. Railway workers are awaiting details of a deficit-

doctors' representatives - which manages the social security system. Mr Juppé's proposals would deprive them of much of this power, transferring to parliament the right to set the budget and oversee its spending.

Opposition to increased taxation and fear of any change, especially in something as cherished in France as the health and social security

system, extends well beyond the public sector. An opinion poll published yesterday found that 54 per cent of those asked supported the strike, and 64 per cent would support a general strike.

All these considerations argue for a strong turn-out today, but it may not be sustainable. Private sector employees and small business resent what many see as feather-bedding in the public sector.

Moreover, the unions themselves are divided. The second largest union, the FO (Force Ouvrière), which supported the public sector strike on 10 October, is not taking part in today's action, having called its own strike for next Tuesday. And Nicole Notat, the fiery leader of the largest union, the CFDT, is facing a revolt from her executive over her apparent acceptance - initially - of some of Mr Juppé's proposals.

The difficulty for President Chirac is to judge how far today's strike is a one-off expression of anger orchestrated by unions worried about their power and supported by a privileged section of workers, and how far it reflects a deeper - and more dangerous - public discontent.

Ex-army boss manoeuvres to succeed Peres

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

In sharp contrast to the baverings of General Colin Powell, there is seldom any doubt about the political ambitions of former military leaders in Israel. But even Ehud Barak, when he stepped down as chief of staff in 1994, can hardly have expected that in less than a year he would be foreign minister and the man best placed to succeed Shimon Peres as prime minister.

The speed of his rise has been accelerated by the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, another former chief of staff, on 4 November. Mr Barak was already interior minister and a rising star in the Labour Party, whose leadership has been held alternately by Mr Rabin and Mr Peres since 1974. After the murder, Mr Peres, 72, decided to strengthen his government by appointing the general, aged 53, to a top post. The defence ministry was ruled out, probably because it would have given him too much power.

In three years as Israel's top general Mr Barak enjoyed automatic respect from the media, but this popularity may not last. Raised on a kibbutz and with a degree in systems analysis from Stanford, California, he has the jaunty self-confidence born of a successful 35-year military career. His political abilities remain largely unknown although observers have long noted his determination to be prime minister.

Peace talks with the Palestinians will remain in the hands of Mr Peres and Yossi Beilin, 47, the cabinet's leading dove and architect of the Oslo agreement, who joins the prime minister's office. The insignificance of his last job as minister of economic planning was underlined by the fact that the ministry was abolished on his departure.

Into Mr Barak's old job at the interior ministry, which he held only for a few months, goes Haim Ramon, 44, the other contender for the Labour succession. His career has been badly damaged by Rabin's death. Just as Mr Barak will be the candidate of the right of the party, Mr Ramon will seek support from the centre and left. He has, indeed, only just returned to the party after being expelled when he ran successfully against the official candidate to take over the Histadrut trade union federation.

Mr Ramon, who comes from a poor background in Jaffa, was a successful lawyer before he became a politician as a protégé of Mr Peres. He switched to Rabin in the leadership battle on the grounds that only he could win power from Likud in 1992. It is not something Mr Peres is likely to forget. On Tuesday, when Mr Peres read out his new cabinet list, he inadvertently omitted Mr Ramon's name. When this was pointed out, he clapped his hand to his head in surprise and said: "Oh. Haim Ramon, of course." Mr Ramon



Rising star: Former chief of staff Ehud Barak (top) is tipped to succeed Shimon Peres (below)

laughed but may be worried that the Freudian slip suggests hostility on the part of Mr Peres.

The message coming out of the formation of the new cabinet is that Israeli politics is back to normal after the shock of the assassination. The Labour Party may regret Mr Peres did not take the opportunity to hold an election, which would have turned on accusations of right-wing responsibility for the verbal violence that preceded Rabin's murder. Already the right-wing Likud under Binyamin Netanyahu has regained self-confidence.

Mr Peres has also spent time cultivating the religious parties. Meretz, Labour's left-wing partner in the coalition, said it was being given a veto power over further army redeployment on the West Bank. Mr Beilin denied this, saying: "We will not give anyone veto over the permanent agreement - over an agreement with Syria or the Palestinians."

Mr Peres appears to hanker after Labour's old alliance with the religious parties, which kept it in power until 1977. But it is unlikely to be revived. Mr Peres did appoint one rabbi, Yehuda Amital, as minister without portfolio, but his failure to win election to the Knesset shows that almost all religious Israelis are now on the right.

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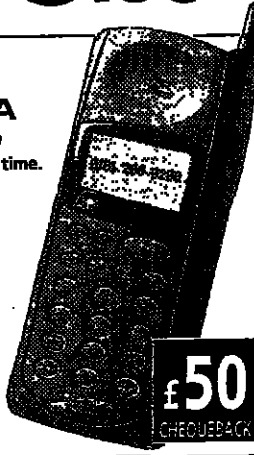
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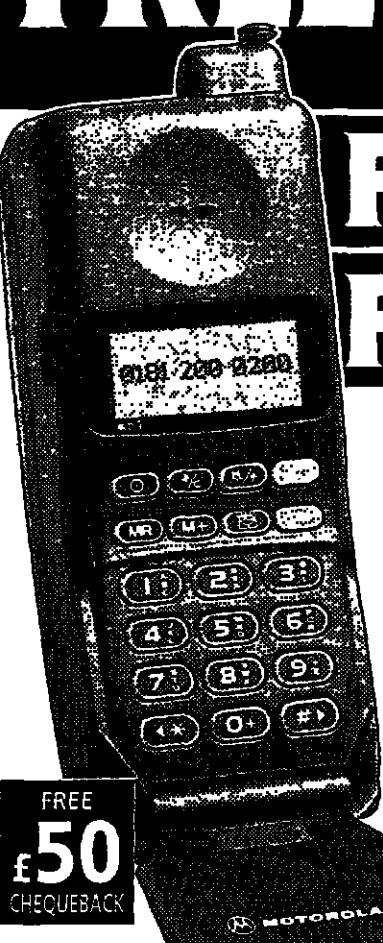
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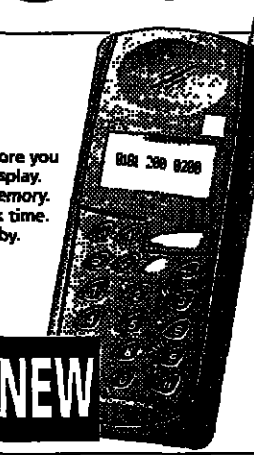
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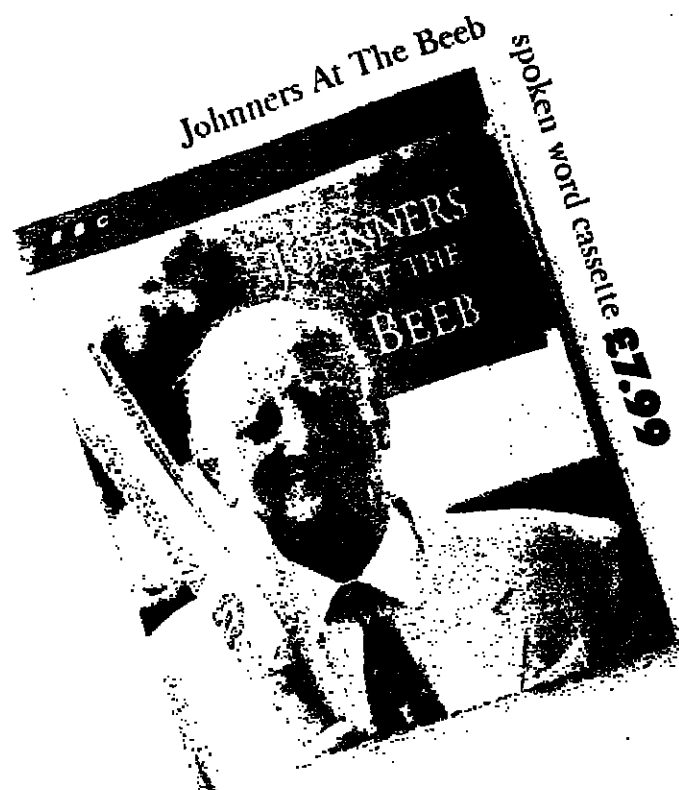
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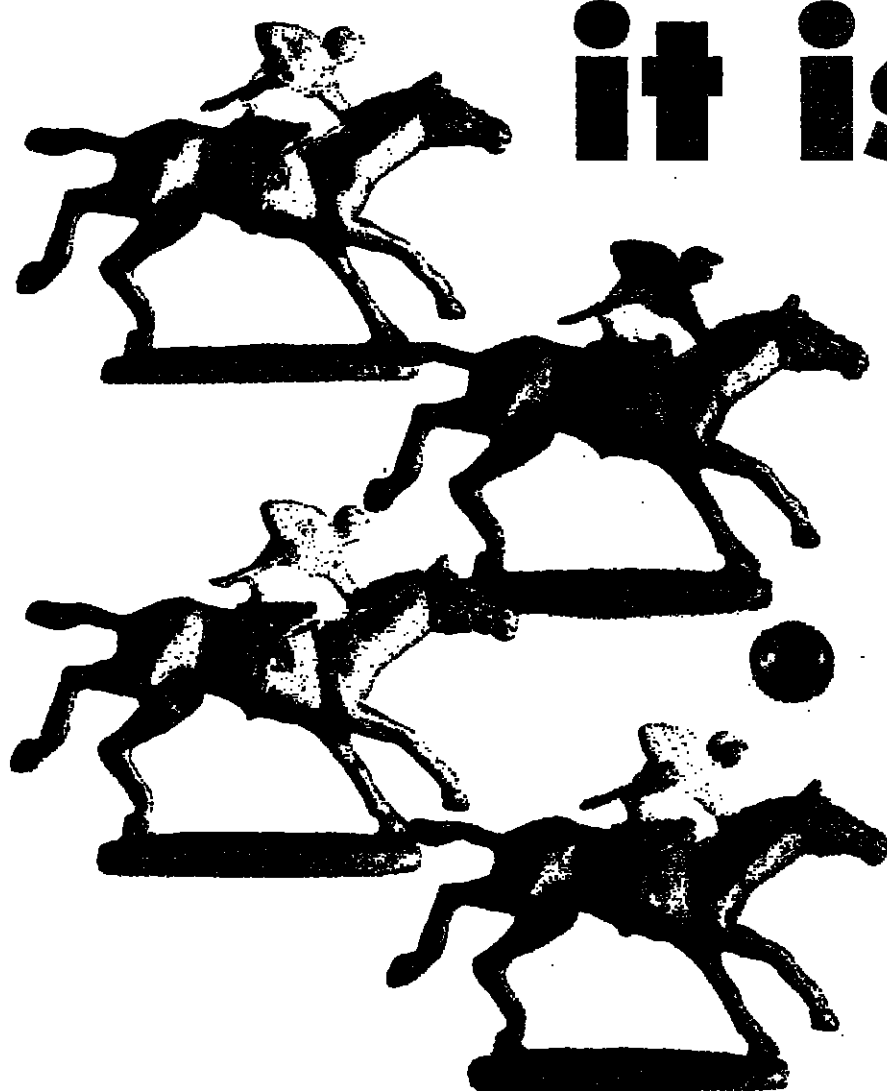
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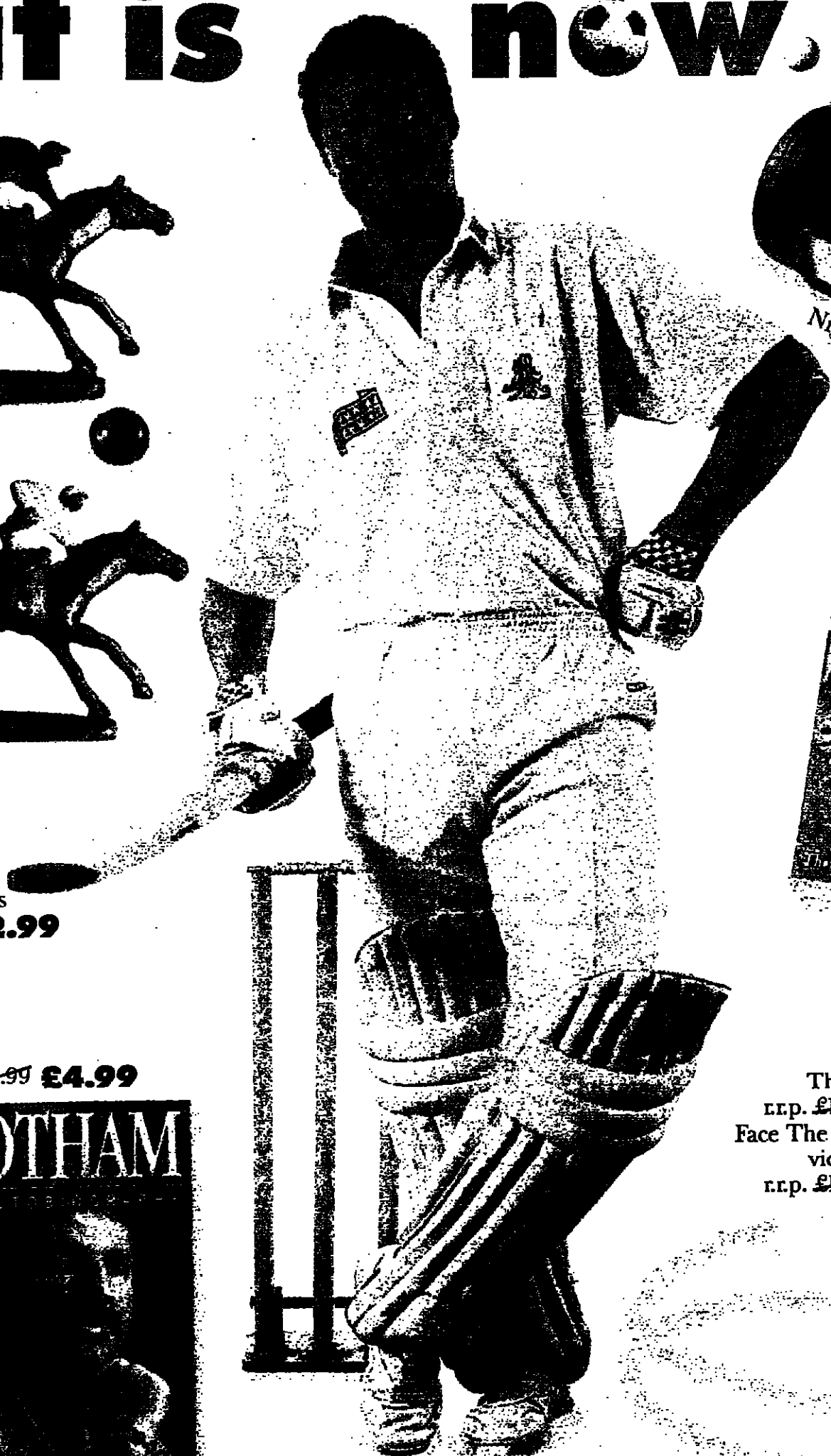


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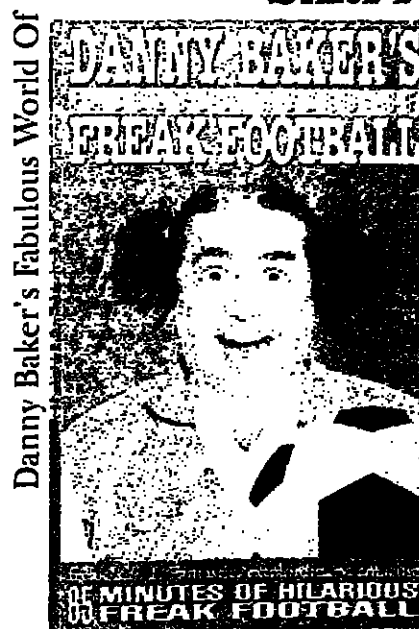


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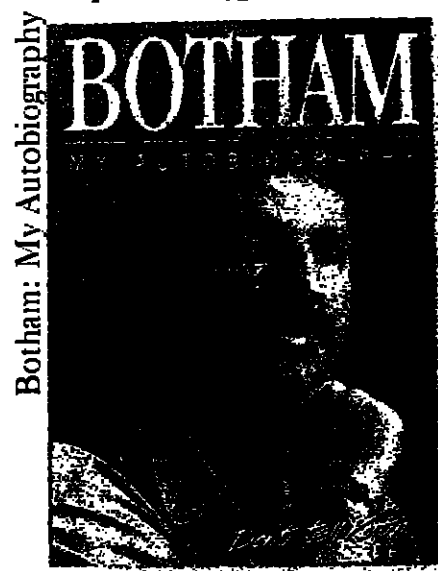
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'If it's quiet here, it's the silence of the grave'

Tyranny in Nigeria: Promises of democracy still ring hollow and Ken Saro-Wiwa will not be the last victim

DAVID ORR
Lagos

A pile of freshly printed posters lies in the hall of the Civil Liberties Organisation in Lagos. Under the heading "Why are these people being detained?" are pictures of six prominent civil rights activists: Abdul Oroh, the organisation's director; Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti, Shehu Sani and Sylvester Odion-Akhaiye of the Campaign for Democracy; Chima Ubani of Democratic Alternative; and Dr Tunji Abayomi, chairman of Human Rights Africa.

All six men were detained this year under a decree of the military regime and have not been seen since. Dr Ransome-Kuti is charged. He has been sentenced by a military tribunal to 15 years for possession of information about an alleged coup plot earlier this year which few Nigerians believe existed. The other men are held

two years ago, says Tunde Oluhboji of the Lagos-based Constitutional Rights Project (CRP). "There are now hundreds of people being held in detention without charge. There is no category of Nigerian exempt from the decree."

Those held include rights campaigners, students, union leaders and democracy activists. The numbers can suddenly rise, as they did last year when an oil strike was brutally crushed and its organisers arrested.

Mr Oluhboji fears he could be taken in at any time. He carries a minimum of campaign documents. Meetings are held at secret locations. Since the execution of Saro-Wiwa, the CRP has received more intimidating telephone calls than usual. It has been judged prudent to move the more sensitive files out of the office.

The Abacha regime is an extremely repressive one and becoming more so all the time," says Ayo Obe, a lawyer with the Civil Liberties Organisation. "You can't tell where or when the hammer is next going to fall. In that sense the criteria under which people are arrested, detained or prevented from travelling abroad are arbitrary. Having a high profile, as was seen with the case of Ken Saro-Wiwa, is no guarantee of security," Mrs Obe says.

In this regard, the military government has been remarkably successful: most political opposition has been suppressed or bought out. Chief Moshood Abiola, the man widely believed to have won the annulled 1993 election, is still in jail facing a charge of treason.

Only a few voices dare speak out. One is Gani Fawehinmi, a lawyer and founder of the National Conscience Party. His offices were attacked last year and he has been detained so many times that he always keeps a packed bag at his side. In it are a change of clothes, toothbrush and soap. But no shoes or book, though he likes to read: they are not allowed in prison.

"I'm not optimistic about the future," he says. "Abacha's programme for transition to civil rule in three years is a ruse. He has no intention of handing over power."

Only two demonstrations have been mounted in Lagos following the Saro-Wiwa execution. Most people are too frightened. The memory of July 1993 is still fresh: 150 protesters were shot during a peaceful demonstration against the regime of General Abacha's predecessor, General Ibrahim Babangida, who annulled the June 1993 election. It was Gen Abacha, as Minister of

Defence, who gave the order to shoot.

"If it's quiet here, it's the silence of the grave," says the Campaign for Democracy's Frederick Fasheun, sitting in the house of his colleague, Dr Ransome-Kuti, of whom he has not had word since he was sentenced to 15 years in jail. "This is not a country under the rule of law, it is a police state."

Nigeria retains a vibrant press, but journalists live in the knowledge that they too can be arrested at any time. Four reporters are serving 15-year jail terms for sedition.

Nigeria has been under military rule for more than 25 of the past 35 years. A succession of soldiers have dishonoured their promises to hand over to civil rule. The only one who stood down voluntarily, General Olusegun Obasanjo, is one of 40 alleged coup plotters facing long prison sentences. That 15 of them were spared execution by General Abacha on 1 October was seen as a reason for hope. But expressions of hope are no longer widely voiced today.



The word from above: Nigerians listening to a broadcast by General Abacha on a street corner in Lagos

General outraged

Abuja (AP) — General Abacha expressed outrage at the two-year Commonwealth deadline for a return to civilian rule. Nigeria should not allow ourselves to be dictated to by outsiders who know very little about us, he told a conference attended by prominent traditional chiefs.

without charge, no one knows where, and have been allowed no access to lawyers. Beneath the six pictures is an ominous black square with the caption, "Several others".

The sham trial and recent execution of the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other minority rights campaigners is the most flagrant and visible abuse of human rights in Nigeria. Their fate demonstrated the contempt with which the military government regards civil rights in a country that was until not so long ago considered one of the most advanced in Africa. Civil rights activists hope the death of Saro-Wiwa will at least focus world attention on the crisis gripping Nigeria.

Rights have been steadily eroded during the last dozen years of military rule. Under a decree of 1984, people may be held without charge for repeated six-month periods, in effect indefinitely. To this power, known as Decree Two, the regime has resorted more and more.

It has got worse since General Sani Abacha took power

IN BRIEF

Spanish MPs deny ex-minister immunity

Madrid — Spanish MPs voted overwhelmingly yesterday to lift the parliamentary immunity of Jose Barrionuevo, a former interior minister implicated in covert anti-terrorist operations, clearing the way for him to be interrogated as a suspect by the Supreme Court, writes Elizabeth Nash. It removes the last plank from a barricade of political obstacles that the Socialist government had piled up to protect Mr Barrionuevo, who stepped down as minister in 1988 but remains an MP from prosecution.

Egyptian fundamentalists jailed

Haekestep — An Egyptian military court sentenced 54 members of the influential Muslim Brotherhood to at least three years in jail. The court also ordered the brotherhood's headquarters in central Cairo closed.

The Pope condemns Mafia violence

Palermo — The Pope launched a broadside against the Mafia, using a visit to their stronghold of Sicily to demand an end to killing. But even as he spoke, the son-in-law of a local Mafia boss was shot dead in a fish market in the eastern city of Catania.

Burma rebel leader calls it a day

Homong — After a year of unprecedented pressure, including attacks by units of the Burmese army, fighting with rival ethnic groups and the United States-engineered arrests in Thailand of some of his top lieutenants, Khun Sa, one of the world's most notorious drug lords, says he is stepping down as head of the Shan ethnic rebel group in Burma to raise chickens and grow vegetables in retirement.

Canada declares war on the gun

Toronto — Parliament in Ottawa passed a sweeping gun-control law requiring registration of all 7 million firearms in Canada. The Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, said he was proud that the move had "given us a personality different from the people to the south of us".

Trial of Berlin hardliners gets go-ahead

Berlin — The trial of East Germany's last hardline Communist leaders, which has been close to collapse because of a shortage of judges, will proceed without any reserve justices. The trial judge, Josef Hoch, rejected a defence motion to suspend the trial of the last Communist radical to rule East Germany, Egon Krenz, and five former Politburo members for shootings of people attempting to escape to the West over the Berlin wall and at other border points.

Angry Sihanouk heads for China

Phnom Penh — King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia, outraged over the jailing of his half-brother, Prince Norodom Sirivudh, for allegedly being involved in a plot to kill Hun Sen, one of the nation's two co-premiers, will leave for China today. An official said the king was angry because he had been promised King Sirivudh would be kept under house arrest and not sent to prison.

Tears for crocodile caught by winter

Tbilisi — The former Soviet republic of Georgia in winter is no place for a crocodile. The reptile, part of one of the main acts in a touring Ukrainian circus, froze to death when the circus was stranded for several days by an avalanche that closed a mountain road.

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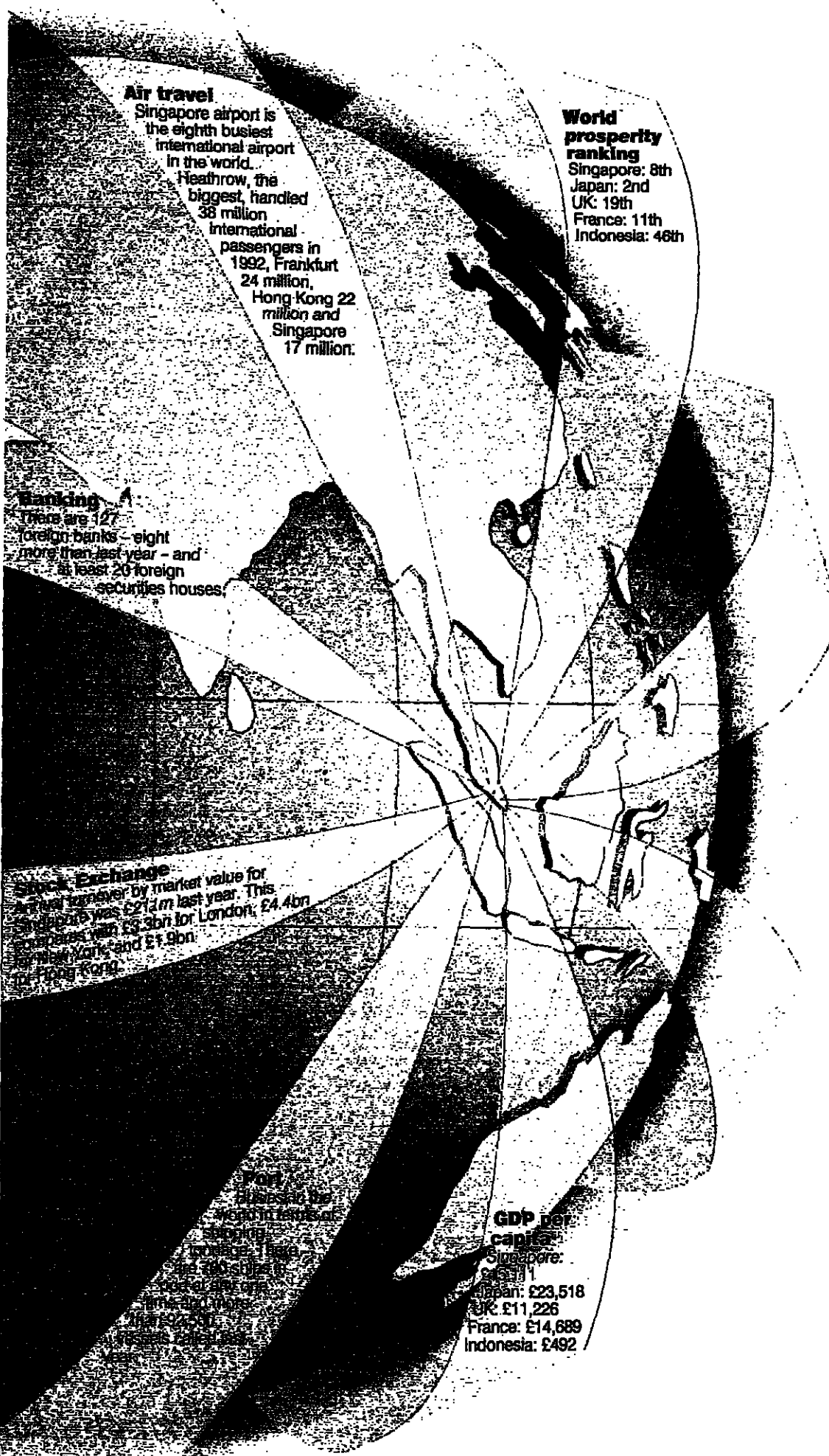
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Singapore Inc: a tough little nation

Nick Leeson finally goes on trial today. It is not only his future that's at stake, but also Singapore's very reputation as a country with which the world likes to do business, writes **Stephen Vines**



When Nick Leeson, the rogue futures trader, enters Singapore's Subordinate Court Number 24 this morning he will find himself in fairly familiar surroundings. There is a distinctly British feel about the courts. Indeed, much of the Singaporean legal system is superficially British.

The lawyers bustle about in wigs and black gowns, which look a lot neater and cleaner than the dusty garb of the Old Bailey. The language of the courts is English, the forms of address are British and many of the laws are drawn from the British statute books.

Yet the similarities only serve to underline the differences. Trial by jury was steadily eroded from 1960 and finally abolished in 1969. A Singaporean court reporter recently explained the reason. "We've got some clever chaps here," he said. "It was all too easy for them to sway a jury."

Habeas corpus, the concept of preventing detention without just cause, has been considerably eroded in Singapore, although the constitution makes clear that unlawful detention is not allowed. Yet Singapore's most famous political prisoner, Chia Thye Poh, was detained for 22 years without ever being charged or tried. He was released in 1989 and confined to the tiny island of Sentosa, where he remains.

Neither is Singapore reticent in using the draconian powers of the Internal Security Act, inherited from the British, as a means of combating alleged subversion. In 1987 a group of so-called Marxist plotters were rounded up and thrown in jail allegedly for attempting to overthrow the government. What linked the 22 people arrested was the social work they were doing on behalf of foreign domestic workers.

Despite these chilling exercises of legal power, Singapore does not have a reputation as a society of arbitrary justice. On the contrary, foreign investors flock to this tiny island state because they admire its stability and rule of law. Singapore's government has gone out of its way to present a squeaky-clean image. This image is self-consciously on display during elections when the leaders of the ruling People's Action Party clad themselves in simple white shirts and trousers.

The policies of the government are tough and the laws of the land are tough because that's the way Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's grand old man, likes it. Even though he is now supposedly taking a back seat as the "Senior Minister", Mr Lee's fears and hopes remain the guiding force of the nation.

Under Mr Lee's leadership Singapore has become one of the most economically successful countries in the world. Its unique blend of capitalism and state control has produced a garden-city environment and a standard of living unimaginable two decades ago.

Lee Kuan Yew fears that all these material gains will disappear if the controls are eased. "We got one little island - 600

has managed to maintain this aura of confidence around the island by an emphasis on law and order and stability.

It was not surprising, then, that the authorities were almost apoplectic with rage when they discovered that the unlawful trading which triggered the collapse of Barings had taken place within Singapore's borders.

The trial of Nick Leeson has therefore become something more than a simple criminal matter. It is seen as an opportunity to show the world that Singapore has not lost its grip, that it is at least as good as anywhere else at handling such matters, that rules will be enforced, that malpractice will not be tolerated.

The trial marks the conclusion of an impressive mobilisation of

employed against those who do not obey the rules and, in even sharper form, to those who challenge the validity of the rules.

The instinctively authoritarian ruling party has little time for opposition. The law is the weapon of choice for silencing critics; they are rarely silenced by direct political persecution. The most persistent and outspoken critic of the government was the former leader of the Workers Party, JB Jeyaretnam. In 1981 he was the sole opposition member of parliament. His parliamentary career was dogged by legal action against him.

First he was charged with alleged irregularities in his party's accounts, for which he was fined a sum sufficient to ensure automatic disqualification from parliament. He was then disqualified from practising law. After years of trying to overturn this ruling he was vindicated by a Privy Council ruling in 1988. The following year Singapore ended the right of appeal to the Privy Council.

As for Mr Jeyaretnam, he was then hit with a slander suit brought by Lee Kuan Yew. Mr Lee won the case. Indeed he has won every case he has brought to court, including a record-breaking libel action, earlier this year, against the *International Herald Tribune*.

The Singaporean government reacts with anger and threats of legal action against anyone who dares question the independence of the judiciary. However, it is most unlikely that members of the judiciary come up against any kind of direct pressure from the government. There is no need. They know what is expected of them, as do most Singaporeans who have absorbed the many government campaigns to make them better citizens and, as one campaign put it, to "share common values".

Yet proportionately more Singaporeans leave their country for a new life overseas than Hong Kong people living with the prospect of Chinese rule in less than two years' time. This is seen as the only solution for those who perhaps do not share "common values", do not wish to conform and are not so fearful of landing on the hard concrete Mr Lee believes surrounds the world outside orderly Singapore.

A court reporter explained why trial by jury was abolished in 1969: 'We've got some clever chaps here. It was all too easy for them to sway a jury'

square kilometres," he told the 1981 National Day rally in a typical *tour de force* speech. "You unwind this, you will not drop on soft paddy fields, it is hard, hard concrete, your bones are broken and it's kaput."

To prevent everyone going kaput, stern punishment is meted out to those who break the law. The thud of the executioner's trap door can be heard almost every Friday at Changi Jail where those convicted of murder, drug-running and some eight other crimes are hanged. Canings of vandals, rapists and other offenders, including housebreakers, are routine.

With no natural resources and very little land space, the government has sought to establish Singapore as an international financial and service centre. Multinational companies have flocked to Singapore, seeing it as an efficient, crime-free, orderly base from which to conduct business in some of the more unpredictable parts of the region where corruption is rife, law and order dubious, and the water never safe to drink. The government

resources to find out what happened: in this respect Singapore's inspectors appear to have dug deeper than those appointed by the Bank of England.

The Singaporeans are good at sorting things out. A cohesive government machine, working hand in hand with a compliant private sector can produce the sort of results that more libertarian societies find hard to achieve.

Singapore also has the advantage of having a highly capable Commercial Affairs Department (CAD), a body not dissimilar to the commercial crimes bureau attached to many police forces. However, in Singapore the CAD is part of the Ministry of Finance, which gives it immediate access to commercial knowledge and information not commonly available to police forces.

Neither are CAD officers simply a bunch of calculator-toting accountants. They have powers of arrest and, according to one suspect questioned in their offices, are quite capable of being rough and aggressive. Aggression is part of the Singapore Inc style.

Wilkes's

Wilkes's Tory colleagues are threatening to rebel against the renewal of the BBC charter in protest at the screening of the *Panorama* interview by the Princess of Wales. The row over the programme within the BBC has brought to a head Tory grumbles about the BBC, and could lead to a rebellion when the charter is renewed in the next few weeks. My pals are furious that BBC top brass kept the interview secret from their chairman, Marmaduke Hussey.

The draft charter will be published within the next few weeks by Wilkes's favourite nanny, Virginia Bottomley. She will include a definition of taste and decency in the back-up agreement to the charter, opening the way for the Parliamentary Prude Tendency to demand a ban on all sex on television, including princesses confessing unfaithfulness with Guards officers.

The whole shooting match threatens to become a ghastly BBC-bashing exercise. But the Conservative leadership can only blame itself. After all, it was the chairman of the party, Brian Mawhinney, who first put the boot into the BBC at the party conference.



Soames: full of apologies

The man with the most unenviable job in Parliament this week was Andrew Mackay, a Government whip who goes under the glorious title of Lord Commissioner of the Treasury.

Mackay had the task of writing to Her Majesty with quill pen in the aftermath of the *Panorama* interview to tell the monarch what was going on in the House of Commons.

While Wilkes's great friend Nicholas Soames was making an ass of himself, for which he had to apologise to the PM, for accusing the Princess of being (as one Tory MP put it) "one sandwich short of a picnic", Mackay was stumped for what to say to the Queen.

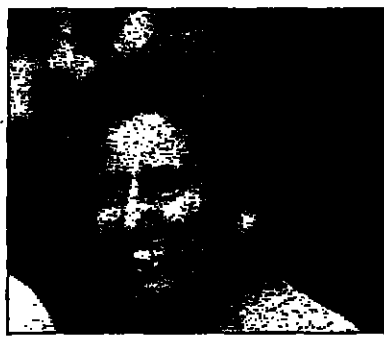
In the end he kept a discreet

silence and told her all about the debate on the Queen's Speech. And very dull reading it must have made.

Robert Hughes, a former whip who has also suffered from public disclosures by a woman wronged, has borrowed a copy of the history of Queen Caroline from the House of Commons library. Caroline was accused of running a bordello in Blackheath, but a Royal Commission found the charges were trumped up. Mind you, in those days they did not have *Panorama*.

Is life at Chequers as drear and constrained as we have all been led to believe in recent times? Far from it, Wilkes can reveal. The Prime Minister - spurred no doubt by Mrs Norma Major, biographer of Joan Sutherland - holds opera evenings at his official country residence to inject elements of much-needed grace and charm to summits with foreign heads of government. Britain's young musicians, moreover, have been getting in on the act. The British Youth Orchestra delighted Jacques Chirac last month with a programme of arias from, among others, *La Traviata*, *La Bohème* and *Les Contes d'Hoffman*. For Boris Yeltsin last year there were favourites from *Eugene Onegin*, *Carmen* and *Rigoletto*. It is

now evident that the Majors have finally warmed to the old place. Indeed, a *Chequers* history is to be published by Norma next year.



Musical historian of Chequers

Harry Greenway, Tory MP for Ealing North, has meanwhile been busy himself on the topic of opera hats - and going to the trouble of putting down a parliamentary question to Tony Newton, Leader of the House, on the lack of adequate numbers of them in the Commons chamber. For the uninitiated, such headgear must be donned when making points of order during a division, to make members distinctive to the chair when colleagues are milling about. There is only one hat kept behind the Speaker's Chair for such purposes, leading to what Mr Greenway believes are unseemly scrambles when several MPs are clamouring to be heard. The issue is now to go to the Commons Procedure Committee.

Stephen Pollard, the lefty Fabian Society's director of research, is a strong candidate to take over the directorship of the free-market Social Market Foundation. Wilkes is reliably informed. It was Pollard, of course, who suggested in a paper that Labour should embrace selective education, although the society thought otherwise and declined to publish it. If Pollard gets the job, nothing could better illustrate the blurring of the old distinctions between right and left since he would be replacing Danny Finkelstein, who has become no less than director of research at Conservative Central Office.

Who could credit the meanness of the Ministry of Defence, Wilkes wonders? The ministry is resolutely refusing to replace former servicemen's medals that have been stolen or lost through misadventure, so Iain Duncan Smith, Conservative MP for Chingford, has discovered from a Mr Jack Conn, a pensioner constituent. At about £60 each, Mr Conn cannot afford replacements for his stolen medals, but the MoD remains unmoved in spite of the fact that this is the year we are all commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Mr Conn could not have selected a better champion to fight his case, since Mr Duncan Smith is an ex-soldier and holder of campaign medals for service in the former Rhodesia and Northern Ireland (his father, Group Capt W Duncan Smith won no fewer than five gallantry medals). The MP is now collecting signatures for a Commons petition to be presented in the next few days.

Donald Thompson is in the habit of sending out jolly cards at this time of year to remind his friends to vote for him in the elections for the 1992 Committee, which took place yesterday. As usual, Wilkes got his card from Donald, with the message "Thompson for the 22" on it, like dozens of his friends. The only problem is that Thompson was so busy filling out the blasted cards, he failed to put his nomination papers in.

Having been to many receptions hosted by Her Majesty the Queen, Wilkes can let a little-known detail slip for those less privileged, who are never invited to join the line to shake hands with the monarch. The Queen wears rubber gloves for the practice.

This highly practical precaution was noticed by those "Down Under" when the Queen hosted a glittering reception for the revellers at the Commonwealth Heads of Government conference in New Zealand. At least, Wilkes believes it was done as a precaution. She surely could not have been expected to wash the dishes afterwards.

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God help the Princesses of Wales

Ignored, betrayed, evicted, debarred – Diana's predecessors suffered for marrying the heir to the throne

Princesses of Wales are actually pretty rare creatures, partly because there have been relatively few Princes of Wales. Many heirs to the throne did not bear the title. Most of the few Princes of Wales either died or came to the throne before marriage was deemed appropriate.

Things didn't start too badly for Princesses of Wales. Edward, Prince of Wales, aka the Black Prince, married Joan Countess, aka the Fair Maid of Kent, when he was 31. Princess Joan had caused something of a scandal before she caught the prince's eye by being contracted to one man and married to another, and then being made to leave the one and return to the other, but nobody seems to have held it against her. Princess Di could take heart from that.

Joan's husband considerably died at the same time that she and the prince got together, and they thought it best to get married without too much ado – without informing the monarch, for example, and possibly without making sure that the papal dispensation was coming through.

Widowed Joan wasn't much older than our Di, but evidently much more mature. She must have been quite cute; when she was over 50 she was surprised on the road by Wycliffe rebels, who contented themselves with stealing kisses and set her free. No bulimia for her; in middle age she was too fat to move.

Catherine of Aragon was engaged to marry Arthur Tudor when he was one and she was two; married to him and publicly bedded when she was 15.

The spouses could only speak to each other through the bishops who translated their Spanish or English, first into Latin for each other, and then back again into English or Spanish for the spouses. At least Di and Chuck speak the same language, though they may not mean the same thing by it.

In those days, there was no Kensington Palace and Highgrove; the Prince of Wales had to live in Wales, so off the two kids went to keep what one imagines was a rather dismal court at Ludlow.

When Arthur died there a year later of the sweating sickness, Catherine, according to her own account, was still a virgin. Then Henry VII's queen died, so he suggested himself as a bridegroom for his daughter-in-law; the poor girl escaped this fate only to be betrothed to Arthur's 14-year-old brother, Henry.

Negotiations were deliberately kept inconclusive as Henry VII looked for a richer bride for his son. Because of problems related to her dowry payments, Catherine had so little money made available to her that she was down to her second-last dress long before Henry VII died and Henry VIII decided that he needed a queen. The rest, as they say, is history.

Princess Caroline of Wales got herself entangled in a religious dispute almost as soon as she reached England. She had to endure her husband's infidelities with practically all of her ladies-in-waiting, but was obliged to leave St James's with him when he was banished by her father-in-law, George



GERMAINE GREER

The record of this family ... if only Lady Diana Spencer had had a history O-level

1, because the monarch hated her even more than he did his son.

As the feud between father and son intensified the king insisted on taking control of her children, so there is certainly a Hanoverian precedent for that kind of thing.

Caroline did make it to the throne, however, after which she did pretty much as she liked. She said of her son, Frederick, Prince of Wales, that he was the "greatest ass, and the greatest liar, and the greatest beast in the whole world", and she, for one, heartily wished him out of it. Nice family.

Among Frederick's crimes was a disastrous attempt to marry a woman called Lady Diana Spencer, fortunately averted. He eventually married the unfortunate Princess Augusta, of

whose pregnancy he neglected to inform the monarch and so they were hung out of St James's. Do we really want to know any more about this family?

Though George III may have married one or two people of obscure birth when he was Prince of Wales, there was no Princess of Wales. When George IV was Prince of Wales he went through a morganatic marriage with Mrs Fitzherbert and lived with her openly. The ructions this caused make this Parker-Bowles business look like a storm in rather less than a tea cup.

Then he proceeded to drive his father out of his mind, which proved easier than expected. He had to be bribed to marry, and when he did eventually marry he treated his good-hearted German frau, Caroline Amelia Elisabeth of Wolfenbützel, with contempt and derision.

Her husband's mistress made the Princess's life a misery: instead of producing the heir plus a spare, which is the Princess of Wales's real job, not opening things and holding hands and reigning in hearts and all the guff, she produced a daughter, whereupon the Prince of Wales abandoned her. She would not be allowed even to bring up her child.

After a formal separation she lived in seclusion, but somehow the word got about that she thought herself pregnant. A commission of inquiry was ordered and she was seen to be innocent, but when her husband became Regent she was ignored. Debarred from court, she returned to Europe,

where she allowed herself a James Hewitt or two.

She was offered a reasonably generous allowance, provided she would never expect or make any attempt to be crowned Queen of England. This she refused.

When George III died, she returned to England, and was welcomed with ovations from the populace. But it made no odds being Queen in people's hearts. An Act of Parliament "to deprive her majesty, Caroline Amelia Elizabeth, of the Titles, Prerogatives, Rights, Privileges, and Exemptions of Queen Consort of The Realm, and to dissolve the marriage between his Majesty and the said Caroline Amelia Elizabeth", was brought in the House of Lords. Though the House was furiously divided, though her husband had treated her abominably, though his infidelities had greatly eclipsed her modest attachments, the divorce clause was carried in committee. The vote in the House was prorogued.

Loving messages of sympathy and support flooded in from her loyal public, but when Caroline tried to enter the abbey for the coronation she was simply barred. The firm had closed ranks. Ten days later, Caroline was dead. When the citizens of London mobbed her funeral procession, the Life Guards fired on the crowd.

The people would have crowned Caroline if they could. There is no kingdom in people's hearts. If Lady Diana Spencer had known the record of this family, if she had had a history O-level, she might have learnt that the Princess of Wales is a title written in tears.

Once we had public services. Now They are out to get Us, so we sue them when things go wrong

Watch out! There's a victim about

Sharon Wood of Hartlepool was followed for a month by a team of private detectives. She had no idea who was photographing and videoing her, but she became so afraid that she called in the police. Embarrassingly, it turned out to be gumshoes hired by her local authority's insurance company. They were investigating a personal injury claim, where a woman had tripped on the pavement and was suing the council for damages. They needed to know whether the woman really was as seriously incapacitated as she claimed. Unfortunately, the accident happened in 1991 and the woman concerned had moved house since then. They were following the wrong person.

Sharon Wood is outraged by the invasion of her privacy. It was frightening, she felt harassed and she feared her children were about to be kidnapped. I called her to ask what her response was to this intrusion. She is suing the local



POLLY TOYNBEE

authority for compensation, of course. On the face of it, she has suffered at the hands of her local authority. But since it was an honest mistake, how aggrieved should she be? Some may think her story is a sinister example of the creeping invasion of snooping officialdom. But since we live in litigious times, with personal injury claims against local authorities having increased eight-fold in 10 years, there have to be checks on fraudulent or exaggerated claims where often only investigation will reveal the truth.

The boom in litigation is part of a deeper change in national attitudes. An atheistic society no longer accepts the concept of the Act of God. Now we have mastered nature, now we have rolled back the frontiers of life and death, we believe ourselves to be all-powerful. The flipside of this coin is that some human somewhere is always responsible for everything that happens. There is no more bad luck: someone has to take the blame.

Everything now conspires to urge people to sue. Since May, solicitors have been allowed to operate a No Win No Fee service, taking up cases for a 25 per cent share of the proceeds. All the client has to put up front is £85 in insurance to cover the other side's costs in the event of failure. It makes having a go a very good prospect. The Law Society offers an "accident line", so you can phone up for the name of the local expert in personal injury cases if you want to sue the greengrocer who left the banana skin on the pavement.

There are ambulance-chasing advertising posters up in many accident and emergency departments of hospitals, urging people who have had accidents to contact firms of solicitors. Local newspapers are packed with advertisements for solicitors touting for personal injury



No win, no fee ... the search is on for someone to sue

Photograph: Hulton Deutsch

business. In *Bleak House*, Dickens wrote: "The one great principle of the English law is to make business of itself."

Since the introduction of No Win No Fee, there is a new breed of disreputable agent. They stop people in the street, often under the guise of opinion polling, and, among other questions, ask them whether they have had any kind of accident recently. When they have collected a list of the names and addresses of victims, they sell them to local law firms, which will contact these people and offer them free litigation. Go for it, everyone urges.

Of course, it does at last give people much fairer access to the law. Where once the risk of suing was so great, few but the rich dared try it; now everyone with a reasonable case has a chance. But the danger is that it changes every minor accident into a lottery win in the courts. It seems to me neither a moral attitude nor a healthy one for the individual. It certainly encourages dishonesty. One council discovered

a whole family had made trip-and-slip claims over several years.

Private investigators, like the lawyers, are making a fortune out of this booming business. "The personal injury claim is an active market," says a spokesman for the Association of British Investigators. "It has doubled in the past 10 years." He adds, uncannily, "It may be the breaking down of certain standards in society that has made people less moral about trying to take money off insurance companies."

The Association of British Insurers, polling public honesty, found that nearly one in five people agrees with the proposition that: "The insurance companies can afford to pay, so it is worth having a go."

Law Society research suggests that about 4 per cent of people have an accident each year, and some 20 per cent of those take advice on compensation. Naturally, the lawyers think this is too few and that more people should be claiming more money. Are they right? I find it particularly

repugnant that people are so eager to sue councils and health authorities for relatively minor matters, thus draining communal funds from the rest of society.

No one would suggest that gross cases of negligence and heinous injury do not require compensation, but the difficulty is drawing a line between these and more routine matters. Many litigants might be deterred if they could only get prompt explanations and decent apologies from officialdom. Doctors are notoriously slow to admit any error, but then they have become so afraid of litigation that they dare not apologise. Increasingly, good, hard-working doctors under stress find themselves sued for doing their best. What may have been an understandable error is turned into an expensive drain on NHS resources. Cases of medical negligence have leapt up: in 1985, legal insurance cost a GP (at today's prices) £483. This year it costs £1,495. It

It is part of the victim culture, where everyone wants his due with little consideration of what he owes

must be permissible to make routine errors in any job and yet we seem to have reached a point where anyone doing less well than the best may be subjected to legal challenge.

All this is a symptom of an idea of a society in which there is no risk and where no risk is ever acceptable. An individual may seek out risk for fun, in mountaineering, pot-holing or some other dangerous pursuit – but even then he expects a Sea King helicopter or a mountain rescue team to get him out of trouble.

Life is full of risks, but we have become increasingly bad at assessing and accepting them for what they are. Some 3,600 people a year die on the roads, but there is scarcely any political mileage in road safety. Yet whatever happens, however bizarre the circumstances, someone must always be to blame. So if a paving stone subsidises and someone trips, it must be the council's fault. The Association of British Insurers dates a key change in our national attitude from the two great storms of 1987 and 1990: suddenly everyone knew someone who had cashed in.

However, it goes far deeper in the national psyche than mere opportunism. It is a part of the victim culture, where everyone wants his due with little consideration of what he owes. It is the Patient's Charter and the Citizen's Charter mentality, designed to sharpen up public services, which instead sent out a message that public service owes you. People do need rights and redress against inhuman and incompetent treatment, but in the public sector a brisk and effective complaints procedure would often be a better route than compensation.

There used to be a measure of pride and a sense of common ownership in the public services people used. Now people sue them.

A case of cheap vodka at the Bar

There is a trial taking place at the moment that is believed to be the first of its kind anywhere in the world, in which the defendant is accused of forging bar codes. Here is an extract:

Counsel: Could the defendant tell the court his name?

Briggs: Yes, I could.

Counsel: Then pray do so.

Briggs: My name is John Lilius Briggs.

Counsel: And, on the 14th of July last, did you enter the shop known as Haterways and proceed to the check-out bearing a large bottle of vodka?

Judge: Just a moment.

Counsel: Yes, m'lord?

Judge: Is there really a shop called Haterways?

Counsel: No, m'ud. It is a fictitious name, compounded of elements of Gateway, Safeway and so on, to give the impression of a well-known store without actually naming it.

Judge: Why do you not wish to name it?

Counsel: It is not my wish, m'ud. It is the wish of Sainsbury's to keep its name out of the trial, to avoid being held up to ridicule.

Judge: So Sainsbury's is the store in question, is it?

Counsel: No comment.

Judge: Fair enough. Carry on.

Counsel: So, John Lilius Briggs, on 14 July 1995 you approached the check-out at Haterways bearing a bottle of vodka?

Briggs: I did.

Counsel: The cashier passed the bottle over the bar-code reader?

Briggs: She did.

Counsel: She then said, "70p, please, love", or words to that effect, did she not?

Briggs: Yes.

Counsel: What happened next?

Briggs: She then said: "Hold on! A bottle of vodka's got to be more than 70p!" So she called for the supervisor.

Counsel: We shall hear from the supervisor in due course, who will testify that Mr Briggs had affixed a bar code of his own manufacture to the bottle of vodka, designed to read out a low price at the check-out. Mr Briggs is a designer of bar codes by trade, and has devised a scheme whereby he can substitute low-price bar codes for high-price ones. We believe, though we do not yet have the evidence, that Mr Briggs recently bought a car for £13.99.

Judge: If I may interpose here, might I inquire what a bar code is?

Counsel: Jumping Jehosaphat! Well, m'ud, a bar code is an arrangement of black lines and spaces ...

Judge: It's all right, Mr Robertson. I know perfectly well what a bar code is. I was just winding you up.

Counsel: Thank you, m'ud. Now, Mr Briggs, when you

you changed the bar code on the bottle of vodka in an attempt to pay less for it than you would otherwise have done?

Briggs: Don't I?

Counsel: Well, do you?

Briggs: Do I what?

Counsel: Deny it?

Briggs: Deny what?

Counsel: What I just said.

Briggs: What did you say?

Counsel: I can't remember.

Judge: Mr Robertson, why not try asking the defendant a simple question and see how we get on?

Counsel: Yes, m'ud. Mr Briggs, how much do you normally pay for a bottle of vodka?

Briggs: 70p.

Counsel: You mean to tell the court you think 70p is the normal price of a bottle of vodka?

Briggs: It is when I buy it.

Counsel: You therefore make an enormous profit whenever you buy vodka.

Briggs: Not at all. It is not cheap to manufacture fake bar codes. It's very expensive. I probably make a net loss on my bar-code transactions.

Counsel: Then why not pay the price marked on the bottle?

Briggs: There is no price marked. I am simply trying to help out Messrs Oddbottoms.

Judge: Is there really a shop called Oddbottoms?

Briggs: No, my lord. It is a fictitious name based on elements of Oddbins and Bottoms Up. (The case continues.)



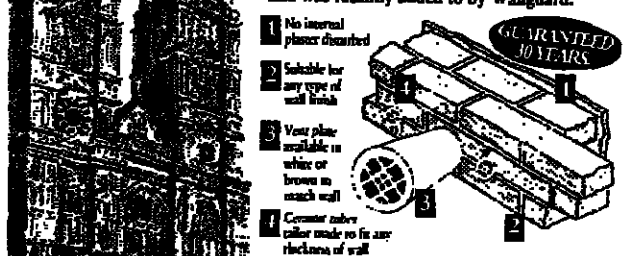
MILES KINGTON

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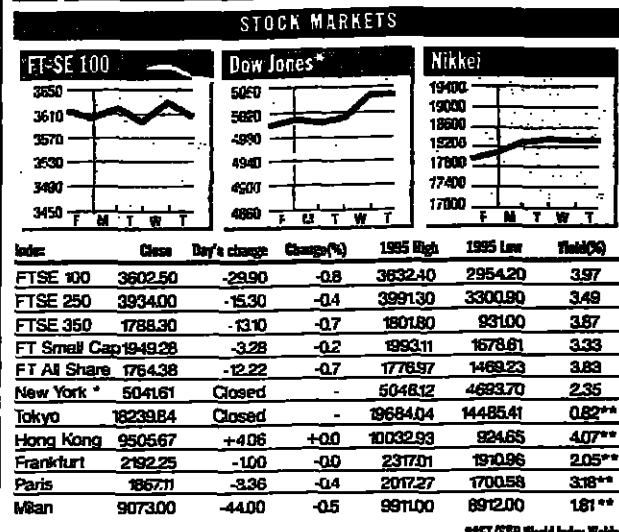
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Generation Why



by Tony Reeve and Steve Way

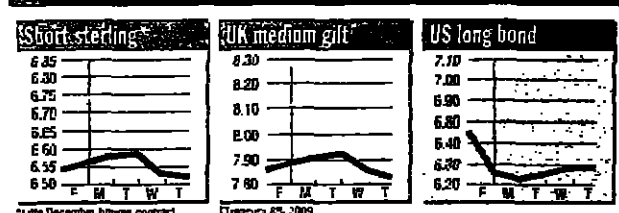
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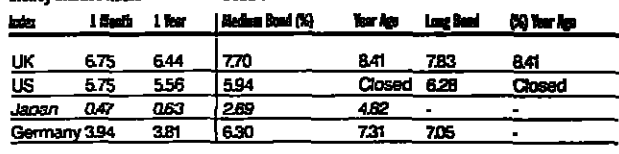
MAIN PRICE CHANGES

FTSE 350 companies (excluding investment trusts)			
Rises	Falls	Price (p)	% Change
Raynor Woodrow	14.5	75	70
Dorling Kindersley	528	24	48
Body Shop Int'l	190	7	46
Storehouse	332	10	31
Atkinson Water	1169	35	31
Southern Electric	913	62	64

INTEREST RATES



CURRENCIES



OTHER INDICATORS

Indicator	Yesterday	Day's chg	Year Ago
Oil Brent	16.85	+0.30	17.15
Gold	382.25	-2.70	384.5
Gold E	241.58	-1.98	245.983
Base Rates	-	-	6.75pc

IN BRIEF

North West Water merger provisions
North West Water, which yesterday reported a 22 per cent rise in interim profits, may make provisions of up to £100m in the second half to cover restructuring at newly acquired Norweb. The company said the merger had produced savings of about £70m this year, but analysts said failure to make provisions at half-way meant one large charge was likely at the year-end, estimated at anywhere between £40m and £100m.

Greenbury 'derailment' threat
The Greenbury Committee's report on corporate governance is in danger of being derailed by "powerful voices" with a vested interest in seeing it fail, it was claimed yesterday. Geoff Lindey, chairman of the National Association of Pension Funds investment committee, told NAPF delegates at a one-day conference in London that opponents of Greenbury must not be allowed to blunt its recommendations.

Lucas chief staying put
Lucas said its chief executive, George Simpson, who was tipped as a possible successor to Lord Weinstock at GEC, would be staying with the company. The comments, at yesterday's annual meeting, was the first public statement by the company since speculation began. Mr Simpson's contract runs until March 1997.

Delta to expand Heathrow operation
Delta, the giant US airline, is to invest in a new multi-million-pound sales and reservation centre at Heathrow. The investment is said to include a grant from the Department of Trade and Industry, and will create about 200 jobs. The company is expected to announce next week the consolidation of its 22 European offices into two, at London and Frankfurt.

Mothercare lifts Storehouse
A strong performance from the Mothercare chain of children's shops has boosted profits at Storehouse, the BHS retail group. Mothercare profits jumped by 120 per cent to £9.3m in the six months to October helped by better stock control and fewer discounts. Profits at BHS also improved though sales were affected by the heatwave. Group profits were up 42 per cent to £34.5m.

Saturn boost for Sega
Sega, the computer games company, has sold more than 50,000 units of its Saturn system, buoyed by a 70 per cent sales growth in the past month. Marketing director Noel Dardis said the system had captured 50 per cent of the market for the new-generation advanced computer games, despite being outgunned by Sony PlayStation's £20m advertising campaign.

Gartmore 'bid' by US bank
Nationbank, the US bank which owns stockbroker Panmure Gordon, is rumoured to have tabled a 280p unofficial offer for Gartmore, the fund manager, being sold by Indosuez, the French bank. The offer would value Gartmore at £565m.

Forte plans radical defence against Granada bid

MATHEW HORSMAN
and JOHN SHEPHERD

The besieged Forte hotels group was believed last night to be considering radical measures to ward off Granada's unwanted £3.3bn bid. The options include a fire sale of key assets, an acquisition overseas and the appointment of a chief executive to work alongside Sir Rocco Forte, who holds that post in addition to being chairman.

Analysts said talk of a radical defence from Forte was unlikely to save the group from takeover but could extract a higher price. NatWest Securities wrote in a research note: "It is our view that there will eventually be a marginal sweetening of the deal."

The emergence of a rival bid remained unlikely, despite market rumours. Suntory, the Japanese drinks giant, formally denied that it had made, or would make, plans to bid.

Little Chef and Happy Eater chains. The company's motorway service sites might also be earmarked for disposal. It was believed the group could raise as much as £1bn from the sales, enough nearly to wipe out debt.

The current Forte management has already launched a disposals programme - for example, putting the US Travelodge chain up for sale. It is also believed to be ready to sell

the White Hart chain of hotels, on the books at £120m. Granada is thought to have already identified buyers for the £500m worth of assets it intends to sell, including Forte's motorway service sites, some hotels and stakes in the Savoy hotels group and Alpha, the airline caterer. Whitbread is believed ready to buy the motorway sites if they become available.

Electric shock: Shares plunge after National Power and PowerGen offers are stopped

Lang refers power bids to mergers commission

MARY FAGAN
and PETER RODGERS

The Government sent shock waves through the electricity industry by referring the takeover bids by National Power and PowerGen for Midlands Electricity to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

One Whitehall source said the City had been wrong to assume that these had set a precedent as the Government had always made it clear that each case would be examined on its merits. "These bids involve very difficult issues - of a different order of magnitude from the others. Whichever way you look at it, it is a major structural change which is being proposed."



Power play: Ian Lang found competition concerns in the two latest bids

The decision, which was hailed as a triumph by the National Consumer Council, fuelled speculation that US or European predators would now swoop on the two regional electricity companies. There is also a view that Southern and Midlands might seek to merge to fend off a hostile foreign attack.

The takeovers would have been a significant move towards reintegrating the industry into the structure that was dismantled by the Government before it was privatised. But Mr Lang added: "In general I do not believe that vertical integration is inherently objectionable whether in the electricity industry or elsewhere. However, in these two cases the structural change proposed could have an effect on the development of competition in the industry. This will, of course, be a matter for the MMC to consider and on which they will need to reach their own conclusions."

Mr Henry, chief executive of National Power, said: "We are naturally very disappointed at this unexpected decision. We shall vigorously press the merits of our case with the

MMC." Mr Henry warned that National Power may now find it difficult to sell 4,000 megawatts of power plant - as demanded by Offer, the regulator - because potential buyers would be nervous about the structure of the industry.

PowerGen, which has already spent almost £400m buying 21 per cent of Midlands, also vowed to fight on the grounds that it has a "compelling business and competition case".

Littlewoods plans £250m share buy-back

NIGEL COPE

The battle for control of Littlewoods, the football pools and retail empire, took a new turn yesterday when the company proposed a £250m share buy-back. The proposal is designed to offer an exit route for members of the controlling Moores family and maintain the company's independence.

Littlewoods also warned that it expected this year's profits to be "some way below" last year's level of £110m. It blamed the National Lottery for damaging

its pools business, but also said trading conditions were difficult for its chain stores and that its home shopping division was suffering from weaker sales and higher bad debts.

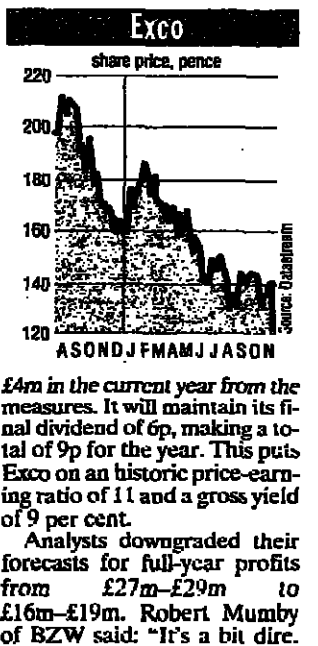
The share buy-back proposal is seen as an attempt by the Littlewoods board to supplant the indicative £1.2bn offer for the company by Barry Dale, the former chief executive.

The board's efforts were immediately criticised by the Dale camp which said the proposals lacked substance and would push the company deep into debt. Mr Dale's consortium, which is being advised by Dawson Day merchant bank, was working through last night on a response which should be issued today.

Sliding exchange volumes trigger warning at Exco

JOHN WILLCOCK
Financial Correspondent

Exco, the moneybroking group, suffered a 21p fall in its share price to 120p after warning that full-year profits would be "markedly below market expectations." Last year's flotation price was 175p.



The scale of the decline in revenues in the second half is pretty devastating. It has recovery potential next year." Simon Whitlock of Merrill Lynch said Exco was suffering from two things. "The foreign exchange industry is undergoing a structural change from voice-based traders (such as Exco) to screen-based ones like Reuters. Secondly, the banks are not letting their traders wheel and deal in the way they did in the past before the Barings disaster."

Peter Edge replaced Ron Sandler as Exco's chief executive in October 1994. Mr Sandler - now chief executive of Lloyd's of London - left with a £297,000 pay-off three months after he floated the company out of administration. Exco had been part of the British & Commonwealth financial conglomerate that failed at the end of the 1980s.

One target could be the 120 regional titles owned by United News & Media, rumoured to be available at the right price. United's regional titles include the Yorkshire Evening Post, the Sheffield Star, the South Wales Argus and the Lancashire Evening Post, and might be worth £200m.

Mr Martin said that the new management "was looking for acquisitions both in newspapers and in parallel media". He discounted suggestions the market for regional newspapers was unexciting. "If you provide high-quality editorial and a creative use of colour, even on free newspapers, it is possible to win. KKR's position is that the management team is paramount... a good team in a sector with potential is what we are looking for."

Amec rejects Norway approach

RUSSELL HOTTEN

Amec construction group yesterday rejected a takeover approach from Kvaerner, a Norwegian shipping and engineering group, which mounted a dawn raid in the stock market for 12 per cent of the company's shares.

Kvaerner paid 100p a share, and after a fruitless 40-minute meeting with the Amec board announced that any further purchases would not be at a higher price.

Kvaerner did not make a firm offer, but at 100p a share analysts said Amec's ordinary and a large number of preference shares would be valued at more than £370m. Amec shares rose 21p to 99p.

Sir Alan Cockshaw, chairman of Amec, said that such a price grossly undervalued the company, which was beginning to see some of the benefits of restructuring after a long period of depression.

It is thought that both sides accepted the industrial logic of closer co-operation. Kvaerner, whose interests range from paper to shipping, has substantial facilities building oil and gas platforms, while Amec has management expertise.

Kvaerner said yesterday that it was only interested in a takeover of Amec, not closer links, and was considering its options, though analysts said Norwegian companies rarely mounted hostile takeovers.

Kvaerner chief executive Erik Toenseth, chief executive of Kvaerner, said: "Having sought constructive discussions with Sir Alan Cockshaw at a meeting which took place today, I was disappointed that we were not able to make progress. While Sir Alan clearly recognised the industrial logic of extensive co-operation between our two firms, we were unable to agree on a way forward."

Yesterday's share raid, executed by SBC Warburg, netted 20 million shares, and sparked widespread speculation that either McAlpine or the French Bouygues group were behind the purchase.

Howard Proctor, building analyst at SG Strauss Turnbull, said he was surprised anybody would want to buy control or a stake in any UK contractor, given the sector's present troubles. All Britain's contractors have seen their margins pressed down to virtually nothing this year and say they are struggling to secure new contracts that pay.

Lyonnais wins £8 battle water g

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Lang has a powerful case for second thoughts

COMMENT

The two bids are different from anything that has gone before because of the extent of vertical integration they would bring between generators and suppliers of electricity

Ian Lang said he would look at the power bids case by case, and clearly he meant it. Campaigners for a referral of anything that moves in the electricity industry will as a result accuse him of inconsistency for referring two bids and clearing five. So will those many investors who failed to take account of the real risk all along that he would refer the National Power bid for Southern and the PowerGen bid for Midlands Electricity. Their penalty was a sharp drop yesterday in regional electricity company shares.

It is hard to see why the market could have been so wrong-footed, for Mr Lang has not in fact been inconsistent. The two bids are different from anything that has gone before, because of the extent of vertical integration they would bring between generators and suppliers of electricity. Vertical integration was the bidders' reason for moving in the first place, because they wanted access to the billing and marketing expertise of local distribution companies. Mr Lang, in a general statement of principle on electricity mergers in August, made clear that vertical integration would be a factor in his decisions.

Nor were yesterday's references inconsistent with clearance of Scottish Power's bid for Manweb, which also involves vertical integration. There are transmission capacity limits on how much electricity Scottish Power can sell south of the border. It is also a lot easier to ring-fence operations in this merger than in the case of the two bids just referred. There was even less reason for

referring Hanson's bid for Eastern, Southern Group's bid for South Western and the bid by Trafalgar House for Northern, which was withdrawn. None of these involved a competition problem, and the regulatory issues could be dealt with by the regulator.

Nevertheless, Mr Lang was on the defensive yesterday, insisting that in general he does not believe vertical integration is inherently objectionable in the electricity industry or anywhere else. He can hardly say otherwise, after allowing Scottish Power to buy Manweb and Scottish and Newcastle to buy Courage breweries. However, the Government's hope of completing deregulation of the electricity market in 1998, by opening domestic supply to competition, has given rise to real concern about the effect of these two takeovers. Combine that with the more obvious worries about the potential for manipulating the electricity trading pool and for exploiting control of distribution companies and there is a good case for referring these two bids.

The decision does have its drawbacks, however. It may well be that the MMC agrees with PowerGen and National Power that the prospects for genuine competition will be enhanced if the bids proceed. There is a real risk that one of the Recs - Southern, rather than Midlands, where PowerGen has a blocking 21 per cent stake - will be snapped up by a foreign bidder while the inquiry is on. It is equally likely that Southern and Midlands will look at a defensive

merger. Mr Lang should therefore refer any further bids for these two companies to keep a level playing field. There is a precedent in the referral of British Aerospace's bid for VSEL on public interest grounds, when only GEC's bid for the same company raised any clear competition questions.

Amec - a good case for integration

That anyone would want to buy a UK contractor raised a few eyebrows yesterday but maybe Kvaerner's interest in Amec is well timed. The UK construction and engineering group - like the rest of the industry - has had its problems but it has recently begun to regain some credibility in the City.

At a meeting between the two sides yesterday morning - after the dawn raid that netted 12 per cent - the industrial logic of extensive co-operation was apparently recognised by both sides. Amec's general construction work and expertise in building oil and gas platforms fits nicely with the Norwegian group's hopes of expanding in the UK. Kvaerner, whose interests range from paper to shipbuilding - it owns the Govan shipyard - has extensive North Sea interests.

But the sticking point at yesterday's meeting was, as is so often the case, the price. A Kvaerner offer of £1m would value the ordinary and preference shares at about £370m - woefully undervaluing the company, says

the Amec board. There is some justification to claims that Amec, whose shares stood at around 60p at the start of the month, is at last turning itself around.

It is unclear whether Kvaerner would want to mount a full bid. A large stake, enough to gain some influence and representation on the Amec board, would enable Kvaerner to bide time until the picture became clearer.

Exchange paralysis left undisturbed

Things appear to be going from bad to worse at the London Stock Exchange. Michael Lawrence, chief executive, had set great store by an internal strategic review, conducted throughout most of this year, which he saw as a means of silencing the growing ranks of City sceptics who have been wondering aloud about the future of the Exchange. The completed review was handed to the members of the Stock Exchange board some six weeks ago. Since then there has been only a deafening silence.

Far from uniting the board on a bold course forward, the review has inflamed emotions and divisions even further. Two elements have exercised members in particular. The first concerns suggestions for alternative revenue streams to make up for the loss of the £60m brought in annually by the Talisman settlement system when it is

replaced next year by Crest. The second is the plan for running from next autumn an order-driven trading system capability alongside the Stock Exchange's traditional quote-driven system.

One hare-brained suggestion was that as a way of plugging the gap, the Stock Exchange should itself enter the inter-dealer broker market in direct competition with its members. Apparently not content with reaction to this, Mr Lawrence compounded the problem in his recent Leonard Sainer memorial lecture by saying the Exchange might go into competition with its members on other services as well, a position not agreed with the board. This has prompted some stern behind-the-scenes rebukes; the Exchange should stick to being a service provider for its customers, and stop confusing itself with a profit-making business, Mr Lawrence's critics insist.

The order-driven issue is also contentious. Some board members fear that the attempt to tack on the new trading system to the old will inevitably mean the death of the quote-driven tradition, whereby the powerful market-making firms determine buy and sell prices. Mr Lawrence's task of attempting to be all things to all men may be close to an impossible one. As everyone knows, you cannot please all of the people all of the time. The way things are going, however, he is going to end up pleasing no one. The present paralysis is a sorry state of affairs for Europe's premier financial capital.

Northumbrian bid: French company to merge its water and sewage interests in North-east after 'full-value' takeover

Lyonnaise wins £823m battle for water group

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Northumbrian Water yesterday became the first of the 10 major water and sewage companies in England and Wales to succumb to a bid, agreeing to a £823m cash offer from Lyonnaise des Eaux of France.

The deal follows recent clearance by the Government on condition that Lyonnaise cut water bills in the region by 15 per cent by 2001. The French group said months ago that it might be interested in making a bid but only when the regulatory situation became clear.

The directors of Northumbrian, who will remain with the enlarged group "to achieve the goals of the merger", stand to gain more than £1.6m as a result of the takeover. David Cranston, chief executive, is the main beneficiary with his shares and share options yielding him about £750,000.

Sir Frederick Holliday, chairman of Northumbrian, said: "It has been almost nine months - a good gestation period - and what I think has been born is a fairly lusty child. Of course the hearts of the Northumbrian board maybe at one point said one thing while

their head said another. But the head ruled at the end of the day - this is a very fair deal for shareholders and customers."

The offer values each Northumbrian share at £11.79, including £11.65 in cash and a special dividend of 14p net. Shareholders will also retain the interim dividend of 11p to be received on an accelerated basis.

The price, which City analysts said "looks like full value", represents a 4 per cent increase over the Northumbrian shares on Wednesday and a 59 per cent premium over the level in March, just before Lyonnaise made its interest known. Analysts have mixed views over whether this may presage a spate of takeovers. One said: "I still do not see where all the supposed bids are coming from."

The French group, which already has UK water companies including North East Water, Northumbrian's neighbour, said that there would be a reduction in jobs in the core regulated businesses to help "achieve the severe price cuts being imposed". But Lyonnaise has also guaranteed that there will be no compulsory redundancies, with people being offered jobs elsewhere in its international operations, or in



Sir Frederick Holliday, chairman of Northumbrian (left), and Philippe Brongniart, vice-president of Lyonnaise

Photograph: Philip Meech

new training and research facilities to be established at Newcastle upon Tyne.

Lyonnaise will now consolidate the two companies in the north east as Northumbrian Water Group. This holding company will also act as an umbrella for Essex and Suffolk Water, which was acquired by Lyonnaise in 1989.

Jacques Petry, President of

Lyonnaise's international water division, reiterated the commitment not to buy any more UK water interests for at least 10 years. The group has also agreed to seek a listing on the Stock Exchange by 2005 for its UK water-related operations.

Patrick Babin, finance director of Lyonnaise, will be joint managing director with Mr Cranston of the enlarged group.

Sir Frederick Holliday will become chairman and, pending approval, will join the board of Lyonnaise. The other executive directors "will continue in their current functions", and the non-executives will also be "offered similar positions" in the enlarged group.

Mr Babin said the deal is subject to approval by the European Commission, but added:

"We know they are happy in principle with this transaction. We hope to get clearance within two to three weeks."

The Government conditions, when it approved a potential bid earlier this month, were attacked as "feeble" by the Labour Party, and as "peanuts for customers" by Northumbrian. Although the 15 per cent price cuts suggested by the reg-

ulator Ofwat appear swingeing, they were less than expected.

The main criticism is that the phasing means the reduction in the first two years will be only 1 per cent - about 90p for the average household - rising to 2 per cent in year three and 10 per cent in year four. At the time Northumbrian said that the conditions were "lenient" and a "poor deal" for customers.

C&W considers articles shake-up

DAVID HELIER

Cable and Wireless, the telecommunications group torn apart earlier this week by boardroom strife, may have to change its articles of association in order to fill the positions of chairman and chief executive with its preferred candidates.

Under its current articles, the company is restricted in its choice of top management by nationality. A clause in the current articles reads: "No director may hold the office as executive chairman or if there is no such executive chairman the office of chief executive unless he is a British citizen within the meaning of the British Nationality Act, 1981."

It is believed that the company would seek to remove this restriction, with the support of its shareholders, if it found a preferred candidate or candidates who did not fit conform to the articles' requirements. "There would be ways of doing it. We would not anticipate any problems," an insider said.

The nationality clause means at the moment, for example, with Brian Smith in the role as non-executive chairman, that the company would have to restrict its search for a chief executive to British nationals.

This restriction, unless altered, could severely restrict the company's search for suitable candidates within the industry. There are only three big telecommunications operators within the UK - C&W, British Telecom and Vodafone. One possible candidate for the job is Christopher Gent, Vodafone's managing director, who has been on the Vodafone board since the company started in 1985.

Mr Smith has already warned that the search for a new chief executive could take at least a year. Earlier this week both Lord Young, the executive chairman, and James Ross, chief executive, departed after a boardroom row which has left the company in turmoil.

Mr Smith is reported as saying the board would probably look for "somebody with an understanding of the industry, clear ideas and focus and the ability to act today." Industry analysts have said that to fulfill these requirements the search might have to include candidates outside the UK.

Speculation that the company was vulnerable to a takeover bid ended slightly yesterday after a couple of days of stockmarket excitement. The shares moved down 13p to 453p yesterday on profit-taking.

Vallance warns against wider powers for OfTel

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Sir Iain Vallance, BT's chairman, yesterday threw down the gauntlet to the authorities by delivering a powerful warning that he may not accept sweeping new anti-competitive powers being sought by OfTel, the industry regulator.

BT must accept the proposals by Don Cruickshank, director general of OfTel, or find itself in the hands of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Speaking at a meeting of the Policy Studies Institute, Sir Iain said that OfTel's proposals would "stifle innovation, reduce BT's efficiency and add to consumers' costs". He added: "I am answerable to shareholders and customers. How can I be expected to go along with this?"

Sir Iain accused Mr Cruickshank of having "ambitions to become an untrammelled competition authority as well as a regulator", and of also wishing to be manager. He said that the watchdog had become increasingly preoccupied with driving down BT's market share at the expense of his other responsibilities.

Sir Iain, whose speech came within hours of OfTel's first public hearing on the issue, added: "It is my belief that the director general's current proposals prestage a highly dangerous new form of regulation, with broad and undefined discretion, or absolute powers vested in a single individual."

Sir Iain, who argues that investors need more regulatory stability, added: "By entering the ring on the side of BT's com-

petitors the referee is stepping outside his legitimate role and distorting competition in the marketplace."

The changes sought by Mr Cruickshank involve the creation of a single general condition in BT's licence and those of its rivals, which would enable him to deem what is anti-competitive behaviour and order it to stop while an investigation takes place.

At present a complex series of individual licence conditions relates to competition and he has no ability to stop alleged anti-competitive behaviour until the case is proven.

Speaking at his morning meeting, Mr Cruickshank said: "Too often in the past, regulation has been after the event. There is a tendency to try things until the regulator intervenes - to do something until stopped." His proposal would also allow damaged parties to bring legal action earlier if they have been proved hurt.

Mr Cruickshank added: "The telecommunications market is different from that in other goods and services in that it is still heavily dominated by one vertically integrated company." Wayne Cowan, chairman of the Cable Communications Association, argued that the OfTel proposals did not go far enough. Professor John Kay, of the London Business School, said that in embracing a general anti-competitive approach, OfTel would be taking "absolutely the right way" ahead.

CBI urges prudence over tax cuts

DIANE COYLE
Economics Correspondent

The Confederation of British Industry's survey of trends in manufacturing showed a further slowdown this month. The survey is the last economic news before Tuesday's Budget.

However, the employers' organisation said there was no evidence that the economy was heading into recession. It advised the Chancellor to keep Budget tax cuts prudent to avoid the need for higher base rates in future.

The CBI's economists trimmed their forecast for growth down to 2.5 per cent next year from an expected 2.7 per cent this year, but predicted a faster pace of expansion in 1997.

Sudhir Junankar of the CBI

said: "I do not think the evidence suggests we are at a defining moment when the economy stops growing." After a few sluggish months demand would pick up part-way through 1996, he said.

The CBI's forecast assumes that modest tax cuts announced next week are paid for by reductions in government spending. It predicts base rates could then fall half a point early next year, at the same time as inflation declined towards the Government's 2.5 per cent target.

On the other hand, a tax giveaway of £40n not financed by reducing expenditure would take inflation above the target. This would bring the danger of higher interest rates.

Kate Barker, the CBI's chief

economist, admitted that the main risk was that growth would turn out lower than forecast. November's survey of industrial trends showed that the expansion had slowed down. "But there is nothing in the survey to say there is a manufacturing recession," she said.

The balance of firms expecting output to rise during the next four months over those expecting a decline fell to 9 per cent. There was a negative balance of 9 per cent expecting above-normal orders in the next four months.

Export orders were the lowest in any monthly survey since June 1994, although still close to normal. Domestic orders were weaker than export orders. Companies said their stocks

of finished goods were more than adequate to meet demand, with the November balance of 18 per cent similar to recent months and significantly higher than earlier in the year. Big firms reported the highest stock levels. Producers of intermediate goods - and especially artificial fibres - reported well above normal levels. Ms Barker said: "This is clearly dampening expectations of increasing output into the new year."

Despite the continued slowdown, the balance of firms expecting to raise prices increased to 15 per cent, up four points in a month. The CBI said this reflected the traditional rise in list prices in January. Adjusting for this effect, price expectations were roughly flat.

Mr Smith has already warned that the search for a new chief executive could take at least a year. Earlier this week both Lord Young, the executive chairman, and James Ross, chief executive, departed after a boardroom row which has left the company in turmoil.

Mr Smith is reported as saying the board would probably look for "somebody with an understanding of the industry, clear ideas and focus and the ability to act today." Industry analysts have said that to fulfill these requirements the search might have to include candidates outside the UK.

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EMU vital to single market, says Brittan

PAUL WALLACE
Economics Editor

Sir Leon Brittan yesterday warned that the single European market could be at risk without the present drive to create a monetary union. "EMU is now more than ever likely to happen," he said.

The vice-president of the European Commission was responding to the question that John Major, the Prime Minister, raised earlier this week about the impact on the single market of a move towards monetary union that created a division between those inside and outside it.

Sir Leon said that "even the present degree of progress towards EMU does and will continue to act as an important glue in the single market".

Without it, "the strain on the single market could well become very serious indeed".

Sir Leon, who was speaking at a conference in London organised by the Federal Trust, was referring to calls from French, German and Austrian industry for compensation against European exchange rate fluctuations. The Commission, he said, was able to reject these calls with ease "only because there is an accepted macro-economic framework in Eu-

rope, in the form of the convergence criteria included in the Maastricht Treaty, which ensures that all member states are pulling in the same direction".

Sir Leon said that other European countries would deem Britain "crazy" if a decision were taken to rule out a single currency in the lifetime of the next Parliament.

That would "only have one certain effect, and that is to ensure that Britain loses any further influence over the process of setting up EMU".

Sir Leon's concern was shared by Richard Freeman, the chief economist at ICI. If Britain did not join the first

wave of countries forming EMU, he said, the difficulties in eventually catching up with core countries might "prove insurmountable and at great costs to British industry and UK welfare".

Sir Leon rejected as completely overblown the Euro-sceptic argument that EMU was the thin end of a very large wedge that would end up with a European superstate running a European budget, relegating the UK to the status of a region of a United Europe.

However, speaking at the same conference, Othmar Issing, the chief economist of the German Bundesbank, said that the

attempt to create a monetary union without a political union was unprecedented. There was no example in history of a lasting monetary union that was not also a state entity.

Dr Issing warned that the removal of exchange rate risk would make it more attractive for member states of a monetary union to borrow.

A new agreement was necessary between those countries embarking on EMU to enforce fiscal prudence.

He contrasted the tight restrictions on eligibility for EMU with the lenient "excessive deficits" provision of the Maastricht Treaty.



Storm warning: Sir Iain criticises watchdog's ambitions

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by Magnus Grimond

Cost control boosts Storehouse

Storehouse has had its share of problems in the past, but the BHS and Mothercare group is now looking in better shape than many of its rivals on the high street.

Yesterday the company turned in another good performance with interim results above most expectations. Pre-tax profits for the six months to October were up a whopping 42 per cent to £34.5m.

Mothercare more than doubled profits to £9.3m and BHS edged up 10 per cent. Even Blazer, the small chain of upmarket clothing stores, is threatening to make money.

The foundation of Storehouse's success thus far has been chief executive Keith Edelman's focus on the nuts and bolts of retailing. All chains are concentrating on building margins rather than chasing sales. More attention is being paid to better buying, thus preventing costly end-of-season markdowns. The supplier base is being pruned and costs tightly controlled.

Management time is also being concentrated on fewer formats. One Up, the lower-priced format born of some of the more downmarket branches of BHS, was the latest to go. It was sold to Associated British Foods for £1.2m in June.

It is significant, however, that Storehouse's improved half-year results came on sales that were flat at £518m. So far, profit growth has been coming from reduced costs and improved margins.

This is all very well but there is only so much that can be cut from costs. Indeed costs are expected to rise in the second half. Group sales have been level for five years now and at some point management will have to produce growth.

BHS, which accounts for two-thirds of both group sales and profits, seems to be responding well to new initiatives. The gross margin improved by 1.5 percentage points owing to fewer markdowns.

Like-for-like sales fell by 3 per cent, but this was due mainly to a more stringent policy on the Choice discount loyalty scheme, and the effects of the summer heatwave.

At Mothercare, 60 per cent of the sales space has been re-designed with a new kid-friendly format complete with talking trees and carpets with fibre-optic lighting that changes colour. The £100m programme should be complete in two years. At Blazer, three of the poorly-located stores will close.

Storehouse shares have trebled over the last five years and risen by 50 per cent this year alone. Along with Next, this makes it one of the sector's best

performers. Up another 10p to 332p yesterday, and with analysts forecasting profits of £110m for the full year, the shares are on a forward rating of 19. This is high, but there should still be more growth to come.

Babcock returns to its old form

Babcock International has had a richly chequered past. Sorting out the one-time boiler-making to dockyard management group defeated Lord King, Jeff Whalley and Tony Garland, three of the stock market's chosen people in the 1980s. Now almost two years into another recovery programme under new management, Babcock already seems to be returning to its old form.

Interim results were never going to inspire and the fall in underlying pre-tax profits from £2.83m to £2.18m before exceptional losses reported yesterday duly lived up to the low expectations. But an interim dividend of 1.25p, the first for three years, reflects the confidence of management that the group has at last turned the corner.

Certainly, a great step forward in "de-risking" the balance sheet was made in September, when a 75 per cent stake in the historic boiler-making business was dumped on Mitsui of Japan for £56m. At a stroke that removed enormous trading losses, chipped in a £26m sale profit to the interim figures and left net cash of £33.2m at the end of September.

But no sooner had that problem been sorted out than another has emerged. Babcock's normally strong German materials handling business has been pushed into the red by the strength of the mark and high labour costs. With commendable speed, management has decided that deeper surgery is needed, providing £9m to slash capacity.

The hope is that with other areas of materials handling pushing ahead a £1.88m divisional loss can be recovered in the second half, with up to £8m bottom-line benefits in a full year. The question remains, however, whether this will be enough to offset the German offshoot's exposure to the cement cycle, now in decline.

Group profits of £14m before exceptional losses would put the shares at 148p, down 13p, on a forward price of 27. The shares are factoring in further recovery

and a successful bid in the privatisation of Rosyth naval dockyard, which Babcock manages and which remains the backbone of group profits. Victory could secure those until 2006, but the shares are high enough.

Bright shining lights at TLG

Shares in TLG have had a storming rise since the flotation of Thorn EMI's former light fittings operations at 115p a year ago. Although down from a peak of 181p in October, investors have still locked in healthy gains even with the shares off 2p at 167p yesterday.

The £77m raised in the offer for sale wiped out huge debts built up at the time of the management buyout from Thorn in 1993, so it was hardly surprising that TLG would sparkle with its first full set of interim results as a listed company. Yesterday it duly turned in pre-tax profits of £11.4m for the six months to September, up from £4.4m before. The figures were accompanied by a maiden interim dividend of 1.4p.

A better picture of the underlying state of trading is given by pre-interest profits, which rose from £9.6m to £12m. This is an impressive result, given that close to 60 per cent of sales are into the commercial property market, which in the UK remains in the doldrums.

The company has built a leading position in so-called specified business, where architects or electrical contractors choose a particular type of kit, rather than buying it straight off the wholesaler's shelf. Boosted by office refurbishment and new products, UK profits have responded accordingly. Operating profits in the core home market were up nearly an eighth.

In Germany, margins have been squeezed as the economy turns down and customers move towards lower-priced, lower-specification fittings. This should eventually help the company to take advantage of its lower cost base outside Germany to ship in product, but in the meantime price pressure continues to cause pain.

Longer-term, the Far East should provide opportunities. TLG has already seen a 20 per cent growth in sales to Hong Kong and mainland China this year so far, with margins a fat 8 per cent.

Profits of £29.5m for the full year would put the shares down 2p at 167p on a prospective multiple of 15. Reasonable value, although the 19 per cent stake still held by Investcorp, one of the buyout's original backers, could overhang the shares.

Simon Pincombe CITY DIARY

Flunkies caught between Rocco and a hard place

The future does not look comfortable for Sir Rocco Forte's finance flunkies. A successful Granada bid would see them under the command of Henry Staunton, the leisure group's finance director and one of the few people in the country to play Eton Fives.

The game - which involves hurling a hard ball against walls with a gloved hand - dates back to the 1820s, when it was played between the flying buttresses of the Eton College Chapel. It is often associated in the prole-tarian mind with a censorious upbringing and regular birtchings. In fact, Mr Staunton is not an Old Etonian. Rather, he went to Ipswich, one of the less elevated learning establishments, to play the game.

The Old Etonian former Governor of the Bank of England, Lord Kingsdown, was also a keen Fives player and has been campaigning for its revival (oddly it is the biggest participation sport in Nigeria, where the oppressed masses play with a tennis ball).

So how good is Mr Staunton? He has not been available for comment since the bid for Forte was launched. But his secretary confirms that he is right-handed. Unfortunately, this is a distinct disadvantage in Fives. Because of the way the court is shaped, the game is far easier for left-handers. Hence the high expectations of Prince William, should he ever recover from post-Panorama trauma.

Defence fodder for the Forte camp in the quarterly Five Star Hotel Survey which shows the profitability of London's luxury hotels to be on the up. The average gross profit margin has risen 5 per

cent to 43 per cent says the accountants, Arthur Andersen, representing a sustained recovery.

"It is likely that London hotel prices will once again reach the heady levels of 1989/90," breezes Andersen partner Alex Kyriakidis. "All but one of the luxury hotels participating in the survey showed an increase in revenue and gross operating profit."

All but one? Which one? The cowering accountants will not say. But the betting is that while one hotel in the Savoy group boasts the highest room rates at £315 a night, the flag ship hotel is the odd one out.

One for Mr Staunton and his birch rods, perhaps.

The truth is out at last. Neither the Government nor the Opposition has actually read



Take Fives: easier for left-handers Photograph: Ailsport

the Cadbury report on corporate governance. The startling revelation emerges at yesterday's National Association of Pension Funds' conference when Geoff Lindey, chairman of the NAFF investment committee and one of report's co-authors, goes public.

"They claimed the report had failed to address three key areas," he said of the Opposition. "Two of them were in the report. The third wasn't, but only because it has been set out in company law for many years."

An inauspicious start for the Oxford University MBA which intends to set new standards in business education by drawing on the traditional academic strengths of the university. "We hope that you will be able to join us on 28 November to discover how the University of Oxford MBA is set to become a strong and vibrant force in shaping future management," says the invitation.

One of the first lessons to learn in business is not to make important announcements while the Chancellor of the Exchequer is delivering his Budget.

Administrative horrors for the London branch of the Confederation of British Industry, which has had the devil's own job in sorting out its Christmas party. The employers' federation has been forced to change the venue twice (at extra cost) and is now saddled with the cavernous Café Royal for the bash on 6 December.

This is because of the popularity of the guest speaker, Tony Blair. Apparently the CBI can't get enough of him and the London branch has sold 650 tickets for the party. When Paddy Ashdown went he attracted just 220 revellers.

CLASSIFIED

Legal Notices

OPRAF

RAILWAYS ACT 1993
DESIGNATION OF EXPERIMENTAL PASSENGER SERVICE

An experimental service is one which is introduced on a trial basis to assess its long term viability. Such services require designation by the Franchising Director under the terms of the 1993 Railways Act. The following services have been designated:

RAILWAYS BETWEEN HEALD GREEN WEST JUNCTION AND HEALD GREEN SOUTH JUNCTION

1. The Director of Passenger Rail Franchising, in exercise of his powers under section 48 of the Railways Act 1993 (c.43), hereby designates as experimental, in relation to the line between Heald Green West Junction and Heald Green South Junction both in the City of Manchester, services proposed to be provided between Manchester Piccadilly and Wilmslow via Manchester Airport.

2. This designation is for the period of 5 years beginning on 12 November 1995.

D C W Revolta
Authorised by the Director of Passenger Rail Franchising to sign in that behalf.

STATIONS ON THE LINE BETWEEN NEWSTEAD AND MANSFIELD WOODHOUSE

1. The Director of Passenger Rail Franchising, in exercise of his powers under section 48 of the Railways Act 1993 (c.43), hereby designates as experimental, in relation to the line between Newstead and Mansfield Woodhouse, and the stations referred to in paragraph 2 below, services proposed to be provided between Nottingham and Mansfield Woodhouse both in the County of Nottinghamshire.

2. The stations referred to in paragraph 1 above are stations proposed to be opened at:

- Mansfield Woodhouse
- Mansfield
- Sutton Parkway
- Kirby Centre

3. This designation is for the period of 5 years beginning on 12 November 1995.

D C W Revolta
Authorised by the Director of Passenger Rail Franchising to sign in that behalf.

10 November 1995

OFFICE OF PASSENGER RAIL FRANCHISING

Legal Notices

OFFICE of the RAIL REGULATOR

The Railways Act 1993
Application for Licence Exemption by

CORBY RAIL SERVICES LIMITED
(Company number 3014437)

Principal address of the Applicant:

Friars Gate, 1011 Stratford Road, Solihull, West Midlands

Directors of the Applicant:

John Merry, Michael Chumlin,

Vincent Gouard, Brian Herbert Lewis

The Rail Regulator hereby gives notice in

accordance with section 7 (4) of the Railways Act

(the "Act") 1993 that he proposes to grant the

Applicant an exemption from the requirement to be

authorised by licence to operate certain networks

comprised within the Corby Eurohub Terminal on

the grounds that he does not consider it appropriate

for the provisions of the Act to be applied to such

railway assets. Any person who wishes to make any

representation or objection with respect to the

proposed exemption should send such

representation or objection to:

Iryna Terlecky, Assistant Director,

Passenger Services Regulation, Office of the Rail Regulator,

1 Waterhouse Square, 138-142 Holborn, London EC1N 2ST

not later than 22 December 1995.

A map showing the extent of the railways, to which the

proposed network licence exemption applies is available

for inspection at the above address between 10.00 and

16.00 hours on any working day.

Dated 24 November

John Swift QC

GIVE UP TO 10% OFF ON ALL RAIL TICKETS

Not to be used on any of the above named companies, which is

being, voluntarily, invited, and, as

required, on or before 14 December

1995 to send in their full name, their

address and telephone, full particulars

of their offer or offers, and the name and

address of those who are to be

connected with the preparation of a

Statement of Affairs for presentation to

a meeting of creditors of the said

company to be held on Friday 15th

December 1995 at 12.00 noon, and, if

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YOU AT HOME AND
WHEN TRAVELLING

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• YOU CAN RECHARGE
YOUR CARD AT ANY
ATM

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Cadbury bandwagon rolls to a halt

INDUSTRY VIEW

PETER RODGERS

The great corporate governance bandwagon shows every sign of having the brakes slammed on, at the behest of the Confederation of British Industry, the Stock Exchange and the Institute of Directors.

They do not want the conduct of directors to face yet another serious scrutiny from a report by the great and the good, in the wake of the upheavals caused by the Cadbury Committee, and especially the Greenbury Committee on top.

The first brought a big increase in disclosure and in the power and influence of non-executive directors; the second took this much further, and made remuneration committees of non-executive directors a new focus of power and influence on company boards.

Sir Ronnie Hampel, chairman of the newly formed Cadbury Committee Mark II, shows every sign of having taken on board what Adair Turner, the CBI director-general, calls industry's "corporate governance fatigue". He made clear that his work will focus on consolidation, not continuing revolution.

Sir Ronnie, the chairman of ICI, believes that it will take at least two sets of annual reports to see how Greenbury has bedded down. He has also sided with the CBI view that in some areas - such as smaller quoted companies - a certain amount of deregulation of the new rules might be desirable.

The Greenbury report was written in haste, under political pressure. Ever since, companies

have been discovering awkward new side-effects that did not leap from the page when they first read it.

Geoff Lindey, a City fund manager who was the National Association of Pension Funds representative on the Greenbury Committee, found another yesterday in a speech to the association's autumn conference. The most important Greenbury recommendation, he believes, is that the remuneration committee chairman will attend the AGM to answer shareholders' questions on pay.

The corollary is that before they can justify high pay, companies will first have to spell out the corporate performance objectives at which they are aiming. Very few now do. Mr Lindey says shareholders will ask questions, focusing managers' attention on performance in a way impossible before.

As this thought sinks in around British boardrooms, it will give new strength no doubt to the rearguard action against the report, which has already successfully delayed full incorporation in the Stock Exchange listing rules and led to a row about pension disclosure.

But there is a more fundamental reason why the corporate governance bandwagon

has probably rolled about as far as it can go for the moment. Non-executive directors have exactly the same legal responsibility for stewardship of a company as executives. Yet the thrust of Cadbury and Greenbury has been to turn them into boardroom police, supervising executive directors on behalf of the shareholders.

This is where the Greenbury idea of a powerful non-executive remuneration committee, reporting over the heads of the rest of the board directly to shareholders, may run into the buffers. It gives the non-executives a separate status they do not have in law, and is thus an attempt to embrace surreptitiously some of the better characteristics of Continental two-tier boards without admitting they are a good idea.

As a fudge, this solution will work as long as nothing dramatic is expected of it. Such reforms are fine for well-run companies of the type in which Sir Ronnie and Sir Adrian Cadbury have spent their lives, and may even produce an improvement in the general performance and accountability of British business.

But they are more than likely to break down where they are most needed - at companies under strain, where boards are in disarray and businesses have problems.

Even at Cable & Wireless, hardly a corporate basket case, the supposedly influential non-executives do not appear to have grasped the extent of the row on the board until it was too late.

Perhaps the underlying reason business does not want to stir the corporate governance pot again is that the logical next step from the Cadbury and Greenbury reports would be to give legal reality to their attempts to create a special type of non-executive director-cum-police officer.

That might well lead to the imposition on an unwilling industry of a British version of the Continental two-tier boards. Business and the City are adamantly opposed to these, believing that they slow decisions and blur accountability between owners and managers.

The Labour Party recently came close, with a proposal that remuneration committees should contain a wholly independent director representing shareholders or employees. With an election looming, it is no wonder that business wants to put corporate governance on the back burner.

This is a serious tactical mistake, as Mr Lindey pointed out yesterday. Anything less than total enthusiasm for the present voluntary methods of improving the conduct of boards could provoke legislation and that could bring anything - even two-tier boards.

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Country

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3 months

US

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21-41

Germany

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France

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45-22

130-70

Italy

24610

55-80

209-224

Japan

6721

88-84

269-262

UK

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31-27

Denmark

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Belgium

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Netherlands

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Spain

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Norway

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Sweden

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RUGBY LEAGUE'S NEW HORIZONS: Australian influx threatens to raise London's status, as Dave Hadfield reports, while below, an England international mines South African potential

Broncos bucking the trend



This is a critical time in the London Broncos' battle to establish themselves as a successful part of the capital's sporting scene.

Although they announced this week that Charlton Athletic's ground at The Valley is to be their home for the remainder of this season and their first in the Super League, it is in two stadiums on the opposite side of London that the more immediate dramas will be played out.

Tomorrow they meet Half-fax in the third round of the Regal Trophy at The Stoop. Eight days later, there is talk of a full house at Brentford for the visit of Wigan in the league.

These are exciting, if sometimes confusing times in the chequered history of rugby league in London. This chapter of which began when Fulham set up shop at Craven Cottage in 1980 and continued when the Brisbane Broncos took over an ailing club two years ago.

Even Barry Maranta, who sold up his 25 per cent of the Brisbane Broncos and now owns 75 per cent of the London operation, admits that it has been tougher than he imagined to get this far.

"We have offered six-figure sums to soccer clubs and they haven't wanted to know," he says. "But now that we have got a real home at The Valley, we can get out into the streets and the schools and tell people about it."

"Once people come to the games, it's very easy to make them converts. Getting publicity in London is a struggle, partly because rugby union occupies a place in London's mentality that I don't think it deserves."

"But we will do it. We got the Brisbane Broncos up from 3,000 to 44,000 and we will be marketing very heavily on the difference between our game and other games."

Maranta's best marketing tool is the expansive style of rugby by the Broncos have been

playing. Since they brought in a crop of Australian players several notches up from the usual London blend of back-packers and lower-graders, they have produced some dazzling displays.

A gifted young pair of half-backs from Brisbane, Leo Dwyer and Ben Walker, have been highly influential, but perhaps the one signing that shows that the Broncos really mean business is that of Paul Hauff.

To call Hauff an imposing player would be an understatement. He is 6ft 8in, fast, agile, has played full-back for both Queensland and Australia and, at 25 with much of his best rugby in front of him, has thrown in his lot with London rather than carrying on with Brisbane.

"Yes, they are exciting times here, and the next couple of weeks are the best chance we'll have of getting a big audience," he says.

"It's important that we perform and get results. People always like winners."

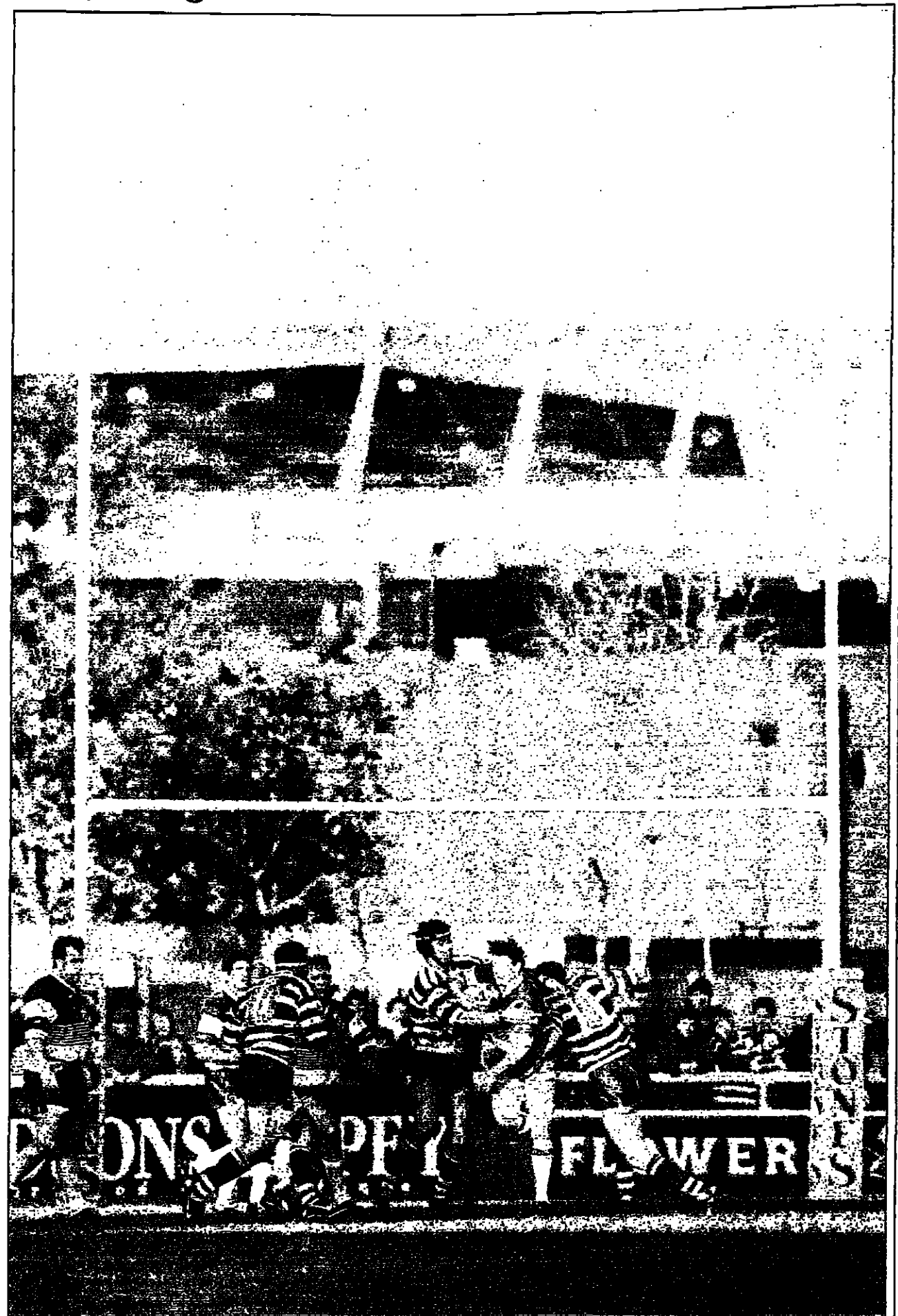
It is the star quality of players like Hauff, Walker and Dwyer that can not only make London winners, but winners of style. "We play a very entertaining sort of game," Hauff says. "In fact, we only know one way to play and sometimes it can catch us out. But it depends on the type of players you have. We've got blokes with a bit of flair and they just want to throw the ball out all the time."

That can create all manner of opportunities for a rangy giant like Hauff chiming in from full-back, and it brought him no less than eight tries in his first four games for the club. "I've had a bit of a drought the last couple of games," he says. "Other teams watch the way you play and start to read what your play-makers are doing. As a runner, I rely a lot on those players."

From a players' point of view, Hauff welcomes the news of a permanent home, even if it represents something of a horror drive from his house, shared with two other Broncos, in Edgware.

"We will start to get some home advantage now. So far, every game has been like an away game."

Their nomadic existence has taken the Broncos into some strange places, of which tomorrow's venue for the last of their games at the Harlequins' ground must be, given the history of the two codes, the strangest. It gave them, Maranta says, a chance to take their invigorating brand of rugby to a new audience, the players and members of one of rugby union's most pukka clubs.



The London Broncos play Workington at The Stoop Memorial Ground in Twickenham's shadow Photograph: Peter Jay

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"Much as they wouldn't like to admit it, they were fascinated by the way we play the game," he says.

"John Gallagher, who used to play for us and is now with Harlequins, told us that they were winning every time a big hit went in. They don't have anything like that in their game."

"We're confident about the attractions of our code. We know it's better than that rubbish against South Africa last weekend. We want to be compared and contrasted. We welcome it."

He intends to do this for the same reason as a dog licks its bottom: because he can. Having almost 500lb of the ground is remarkable enough for a 64-year-old grandfather anyway. It's all the more extraordinary when you meet the man once described as "probably the strongest Scot who ever lived". Far from being an ageing colossus, Gallagher looks, frankly, a bit of a squirt. He is just 5ft 5in, scales a mere 12 stone 8lb and whispers rather than bellows—scarcely the stuff of legends.

Yet Gallagher, who is still among the country's top powerlifters despite his advanced years, is living proof that the weak can not only inherit the earth, but can even lift it a few inches. As a child, he was so sickly that he spent months off school with pneumonia, pleurisy and asthma. Health handicaps like that would have been bad enough in Hampstead, but Gallagher lived in the Gorbals area of Glasgow. Doctors predicted he would not live to become a teenager. If disease didn't get him, then the wee hard men would.

However, his handicap became his salvation. John Gallagher came home from his first job in a warehouse, reading books on strongmen, psychology and hypnosis. He started to believe he could get better—and it worked. At 15, he joined a weightlifting club. At first, he could hardly lift the bar. Four years later, he was stronger than the Scottish weightlifting champion. He could juggle with 56lb weights, bend iron bars and break chains around his chest. For a while, he lifted a 16 stone policeman above his head and held him there with one hand, blow up hot-water bottles and invited people to hit him in the chest with a sledgehammer. He even convinced his 11-year-old sister, a sub-five stone waif, that it was all in the mind. Soon she was breaking six-inch nails in half. "This power is within everyone," he says.

His most famous feats were even more spectacular. Outside an Aberdeen hotel he lifted the Dinnie Stones, named after Donald Dinnie, a 19th-century Scottish showman who was the only man to have lifted them. Gallagher, weighing just 11 stone 7lb, picked up the large granite boulder weighing 448lb, with such ease and carried it across a stage that the 6ft 7in Highland Games champion, who was there as the main attraction, refused to compete against him. He followed this by picking up the Inch Bell. The 182lb

man, who trains three times a week, believes he is getting stronger. Illness (he has had bouts of yuppy flu for years) may slow him down, but he foresees himself lifting weights well into his seventies, and says: "I would like to keep improving. My best squat is 430lb and I'm sure I can beat that."

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Age holds no barriers to barbells



KEITH ELLIOTT at large

At an age when most people are window-shopping for wheelchairs, looking at sheltered accommodation or thinking that Malta may be a bit lively for their holidays, John Gallagher is planning to lift a legendary boulder weighing considerably more than three old ladies and the lavatory.

He intends to do this for the same reason as a dog licks its bottom: because he can. Having almost 500lb of the ground is remarkable enough for a 64-year-old grandfather anyway. It's all the more extraordinary when you meet the man once described as "probably the strongest Scot who ever lived". Far from being an ageing colossus, Gallagher looks, frankly, a bit of a squirt. He is just 5ft 5in, scales a mere 12 stone 8lb and whispers rather than bellows—scarcely the stuff of legends.

Yet Gallagher, who is still among the country's top powerlifters despite his advanced years, is living proof that the weak can not only inherit the earth, but can even lift it a few inches. As a child, he was so sickly that he spent months off school with pneumonia, pleurisy and asthma. Health handicaps like that would have been bad enough in Hampstead, but Gallagher lived in the Gorbals area of Glasgow. Doctors predicted he would not live to become a teenager. If disease didn't get him, then the wee hard men would.

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Children who put the game into perspective

So far life has been very good to me. Playing with the great Wigan side, representing Great Britain and England and now the challenge of a new life in Australia with the Sydney City Roosters, with the luxury of a second home in Bondi. I'm grateful for all of it.

I knew that I was lucky, but never quite how lucky until I took on the biggest challenge of my life—coaching rugby league to youngsters in the notorious townships of South Africa. It is an experience that will linger forever in my mind.

Along with Brian Foley, the youth coach at the Wigan St Patrick's club, we went into places you only ever hear of as hostile and unsafe on the back of an open wagon, unsure of

what was going to be waiting for us.

Dave Southern, from Widnes, has been putting his energy into this work for several years and over 3,000 youngsters have been exposed to the game as a result. We would be all right, even in areas where the crime statistics make those in New York put by comparison, he assured us. They would recognise the wagon and know that we were there to help.

What he did not tell us was that Monica, a voluntary worker from England who has been helping out on the project, had been stopped at gun-point in Alexandra and had her vehicle car-jacked from her a few days earlier. Had we known that, we would have been even more apprehensive than we were. I also asked myself whether I was going to be able to do anything worthwhile for the children I was supposed to work with. Our first day put my mind at ease.

We were in a Catholic orphanage in the township of Vaal, run by an Irish priest called Father Terry, who has been there for the last 20 years. The person there I will always remember is three-year-old



England's Phil Clarke has found a visit to South Africa to coach in townships the perfect antidote to his World Cup final disappointment

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Faith, who was suffering from malnutrition and called me Father Philip, because he assumed I was a priest.

I lifted him up, just as I had hoped to lift the World Cup at Wembley. My reward then was a loser's medal, this time a smile. Talk about restoring your faith.

We coached the skills of the game that day to over 100 children and their eye-to-hand coordination and agility were a

pleasant surprise. At the end, we gave them rugby shirts donated by the players and parents of Wigan St Patrick's under-16s and the looks on their faces were worth the whole trip.

The next few days took us to a series of coaching clinics, which have left me with a host of memories. There was Sipho, an 11-year-old from a shanty in Alexandra, who wore his Wigan shirt with such pride and assured us, with equal pride, that he was the best player around.

He was good, very good. Extraordinarily courageous, he just went for the line every time, no matter what. But that was almost the norm among kids who showed such a burning desire to play the game.

Then there was Vincent, an

Reading v Southampton (7.45), Aston Villa v Manchester United (7.45), Arsenal v Tottenham (7.45), Liverpool v Manchester United (7.45), Chelsea v Manchester United (7.45), Newcastle v Manchester United (7.45), Everton v Manchester United (7.45), West Ham v Manchester United (7.45), Sheffield Wednesday v Manchester United (7.45), Blackburn v Manchester United (7.45), Middlesbrough v Manchester United (7.45), Derby v Manchester United (7.45), Preston v Manchester United (7.45), Luton v Manchester United (7.45), Barnsley v Manchester United (7.45), Millwall v Manchester United (7.45), Notts County v Manchester United (7.45), Shrewsbury v Manchester United (7.45), Exeter v Manchester United (7.45), Hereford v Manchester United (7.45), Mansfield v Manchester United (7.45), Rochdale v Manchester United (7.45), Tranmere v Manchester United (7.45), Walsley v Manchester United (7.45), Wrexham v Manchester United (7.45), York City v Manchester United (7.45), Grimsby v Manchester United (7.45), Lincoln v Manchester United (7.45), Peterborough v Manchester United (7.45), Scunthorpe v Manchester United (7.45), Southend v Manchester United (7.45), Torquay v Manchester United (7.45), Wokingham v Manchester United (7.45), Wycombe v Manchester United (7.45), York City v Manchester United (7.45), Grimsby v Manchester United (7.45), Lincoln v Manchester United (7.45), Peterborough v Manchester United (7.45), Scunthorpe v Manchester United (7.45), Southend v Manchester United (7.45), Torquay v Manchester United (7.45), Wokingham v Manchester United (7.45), Wycombe v Manchester United (7.45), York City v Manchester United (7.45), Grimsby v Manchester United (7.45), Lincoln v Manchester United (7.45), Peterborough v Manchester United (7.45), Scunthorpe v Manchester United (7.45), Southend v Manchester United (7.45), Torquay v Manchester United (7.45), Wokingham v Manchester United (7.45), Wycombe v Manchester United (7.45), York City v Manchester United (7.45), Grimsby v Manchester United (7.45), Lincoln v Manchester United (7.45), Peterborough v Manchester United (7.45), Scunthorpe v Manchester United (7.45), Southend v Manchester United (7.45), Torquay v Manchester United (7.45), Wokingham v Manchester United (7.45), Wycombe v Manchester United (7.45), York City v Manchester United (7.45), Grimsby v Manchester United (7.45), Lincoln v Manchester United (7.45), Peterborough v Manchester United (7.45), Scunthorpe v Manchester United (7.45), Southend v Manchester United (7.45), Torquay v Manchester United (7.45), Wokingham v Manchester United (7.45), Wycombe v Manchester United (7.45), York City v Manchester United (7.45), Grimsby v Manchester United (7.45), Lincoln v Manchester United (7.45), Peterborough v Manchester United (7.45), Scunthorpe v Manchester United (7.45), Southend v Manchester United (7.45), Torquay v Manchester United (7.45

SPORT

Rangers still hampered by domestic ambition

Where do Rangers go from here? The Glasgow club have been champions of Scotland for the last seven years, but their failure to make an impression in the Champions' League has placed them firmly at a crossroads where they will have to decide in which direction their ambitions lie.

They have proved without question that they are at the top of the Scottish tree, but again have been found wanting in the European arena, the very area where David Murray, the chair-

man, craves success. A draw against Steaua Bucharest at Ibrox on Wednesday killed off their hopes for another season, although they did have the consolation of reaching the Champions' League itself after coming through the preliminary round against Famagusta of Cyprus.

In other seasons they have fallen at the first hurdle, although their appearance in the league sections this time merely highlighted inadequacies in the Rangers side which are seldom exposed in domestic foot-

ball. Hard work and character can achieve only limited success, and those Rangers supporters who roundly cheered John Brown for his crunching tackles against Juventus and Steaua clearly have not yet grasped the fundamental issues at work here.

The big danger for Rangers is that those supporters and the players themselves become blinded by their determination to overtake Celtic's run of nine consecutive League wins, forsaking European ambitions. The Scottish League title can be won

Scotland's champions have again made no progress in the European Cup. David McKinney considers their failure

by gathering indifferent victories, the European Cup cannot.

Murray spent close to £10m on players over the summer, including the £4.3m which brought Paul Gascoigne from Lazio, yet the evidence of their European run would suggest they are no better placed to compete there than they were seven years ago. Against Steaua they were ex-

posed several times by mobile and skilful opponents who had the awareness to drift in and out of different positions as required, while Rangers stuck to a more rigid formation.

The suggestion of Dumitru Dumitriu, the Romanian coach, that Gascoigne and Brian Laudrup were European-style players was an accurate assessment,

as those two took their skills where they were needed, but were constantly let frustrated as their Scottish colleagues failed to appreciate their work.

Time and again Laudrup worked himself into a good position and found no help. For Rangers to progress, Walter Smith, the manager, requires players who are more sympathetic to the workings of the creators.

Gascoigne has also shown he can create for Rangers, although Dumitriu felt that he cannot sustain his form over 90 minutes. If

that is indeed the case, Smith must decide where best to play the Englishman. In an attacking role, he showed against Steaua, Celtic and Hearts that he can score goals, the problem is filling the hole he leaves in the midfield, a gap exploited by Aberdeen in the Coca-Cola Cup semi-final and again in the league.

Smith could buy again and indeed there are suggestions that he is interested in Mikel Beck of Fortuna Cologne. The Danish striker would perhaps fill the gap which has been left in the

Rangers' front line since the departure of Mark Hateley to OPR.

The problem is likely to require major surgery, and while purchasing players is no guarantee of success, Smith's best bet might be a long-term approach to bring quality young Scottish players through the ranks.

Sadly, Rangers' European failure is an indictment of the whole of club football in Scotland at a time when, conversely, the national team and Under-21s have qualified for the latter stages of the European Championships.

McRae can become the greatest

In the euphoria of triumph, especially a triumph of this magnitude, it is easy to make exaggerated claims and rash predictions. Colin McRae is, after all, not only Britain's first rally world champion but also the youngest.

However, David Richards is not usually given to wild fancies or jingoistic tendencies. This, he reminded, is the dispassionate businessman who told McRae to concede the Catalunya rally to his team-mate, Carlos Sainz, for "sound commercial reasons".

So Richards' assertion following McRae's awesome victory in the Network Q RAC Rally this week, that his charge has the talent to become the greatest rally driver of them all, may have rather more substance than the regulation post-event eulogy.

Richards, boss of the Banbury-based Prodrive team that runs Subaru's rallying operation, said: "For anyone to be champion now, he has to be special. Colin is so focused that he really could surpass any of the previous champions."

"Some drivers have to work at their driving, but some are natural. Colin is a natural and he knows he is way quicker than any one out there at the moment."

Richards stresses that McRae has had the ambition and diligence to harness his skill, but is patently challenging the 27-year-old Scot to go on and fulfil his prophecy.

"You have to set new goals and keep striving to improve," Richards said. "He's worked hard on his fitness and commitment. Now he's won the world championship it would be all too easy to settle for that, to have an easy life now and then."

The businessman the rewards now beckoning for McRae. A first prize of £3,000 in the RAC

Britain's first world rally champion has awesome potential, says Derick Allsop

Rally. Richards points out, "is irrelevant". The championship is worth a bonus to the team of £2m and to McRae more than £1m. He could, suggests Richards, treble that figure annually from now on.

"If Colin wants to hibernate in Monaco, or with his mother in Lanarkshire, he can, but if he wants to develop the sponsorship market, anything is possible," Richards said. "Carlos has been the best at it in rallying. He's been getting \$5m (£3.2m) a year from it."

McRae, described by Richards as "genuinely shy", has been made aware that PR, like fitness and commitment, is part of the deal. He maintains, however, that sporting achievement remains the driving force.

"Now is the time to take advantage of the financial possibilities, but the money is not the motivation," McRae said. "This is just the beginning. I want to be quick and consistent in all events. I'm still very new. I want to be there for a long time."

His co-driver, Derek Ringer, who has had to endure the scares and mishaps of McRae's formative years, testifies to the astuteness of his partner. Ringer said: "No one's an overnight sensation in this sport. Colin's been getting there for many years."

The journey will soon be resumed, McRae said: "We are starting again almost straight away, testing for next year, in Kenya."

Richards can be assured, hibernation does not figure in McRae's immediate plans.



Bare slopes: despite snow covering on just one of the trails at Park City, officials still hope to stage this weekend's men's World Cup ski races at the Utah resort

Charlton kicks off skills wall for youngsters

GLENN MOORE

Bobby Charlton, showing the same sense of timing that distinguished his football career, yesterday launched a new initiative designed to improve youngsters' basic ball skills.

As British interest in the European competitions was reduced to just Nottingham Forest, Charlton announced Football, a concept which, like all the best ideas, is so simple the only wonder is why no one had thought of it before.

A Football is a concrete wall, 10 metres by three metres, which is embedded in the ground with angled corners, like a triptych. The body of the wall is overlaid with a life-size photograph of goalmouth action from the Premiership. The idea is that children can use the wall, which will have target boxes painted on it, to practice shooting, passing and heading, either on their own, or with friends.

The wall will be paid for by advertising on the back and offered free to local authorities, schools and sports clubs. The

company behind it, Football, hopes to install 1,000 sites in the next year, with the cost covered by £5.2m in advertising revenue. The backdrop will be changed every fortnight to sustain interest.

"I learned by playing in the street but, nowadays, the streets are full of cars," Charlton said. "Parents do not want their kids playing in them and they stay inside and play with computers and watch TV instead."

"Kids do not practice the basics anymore. They go straight into matches and hardly touch the ball. I want our youngsters to master their skills and make British football the envy of the world again."

The idea is backed by the Football Association Premier League and has been tested by Aston Villa. There are some reservations, however. For instance, why was the Professional Football Association's excellent "Football in the Community" scheme not involved? Will sites have control over the choice of advertisements? Obviously, schools will not want cigarette or alcohol advertising on their premises.

Harriers put Woking record on the line

Non-League notebook
LIZ SEARL

Two teams who last met at Wembley in May meet again tomorrow in the more mundane surroundings of league football. Woking entertain the side they beat in last season's FA Trophy final, Kidderminster Harriers.

Now second in the Vauxhall Conference to Kidderminster's third, Woking are defending a remarkable home record of 20 matches undefeated, which dates back to Boxing Day last year.

Much of the credit for Woking's run is given to their solid defence, but Kidderminster, who last week ended a seven-week spell without a win, may be more concerned tomorrow with two of the home side's forwards. Clive Walker, the Conference Player of the Year, is in top form with eight goals from seven matches, while Scott Steele has netted six goals in six appearances.

Both teams were involved in FA Cup first-round replays in midweek. Woking will take inspiration from their 2-1 home

defeat of Barnet, which takes them through to the second round of the Cup for the seventh year running. In the celebrations that ensued Woking fans became the first people to taste Britain's newest beer, Cardinal Ale. The brew, so called after the club's nickname, is being manufactured by a member of Woking's board of directors.

On a more sober note, Kidderminster went out of the Cup in their replay when they were beaten 3-2 on penalties by Sutton United after a 1-1 draw. Nevertheless, Kidderminster have records of their own to pursue tomorrow. The Harriers striker Paul Davies, one of the top three goalscorers in the league this season, will be aiming to match the Conference's all-time goalscoring record. He notched up his 171st goal last weekend and will be keen to overtake the existing record of 172, held by the former Run-corn and Barnet striker, Mark Carter.

Because of extensive redevelopment in progress at Woking's Kingfield stadium, the game tomorrow will be all ticket.

Kite 'to captain US in 1997'

GOLF

Tom Kite, a former US Open champion, will be captain of the 1997 US Ryder Cup team. The USPGA will announce the new Ryder Cup captain on 29 November, but unidentified sources close to the USPGA are quoted in an American magazine, *Golfweek*, as saying Kite has already been chosen.

Kite, 45, has played in seven Ryder Cup teams, most re-

cently the winning effort captained by Tom Watson at The Belfry in 1993. He was chosen from a list of candidates that included Larry Nelson, Ben Crenshaw and Curtis Strange.

The 32nd Ryder Cup will be held from 26 to 28 September 1997 at Valderrama Golf Club in Sotogrande, Spain.

Greg Norman criticised the speed of the greens at Kingston Heath after struggling to stay in touch with the leaders in the first round of the Australian

Open yesterday. The world No 1, chasing his first victory in his homeland since 1990, fired a level-par 72 to finish four shots off the pace.

"There were putts out there that I haven't seen anywhere in the world," Norman said afterwards, referring to the lightning speed of the greens.

Five Australians - Peter McWhinney, Lyndsay Stephen, David Brandson, Rob Whitlock and Lucien Tinkler - share the lead on 68, four under par.

Hearn kids the Americans

Boxing

Barry Hearn pulled off a major piece of ideology which enabled Paul "Silky" Jones to pull off a dream result in Sheffield on Wednesday night.

Hearn, Jones's manager, told handlers of the beaten champion, Verno Phillips, that Jones was nothing special and Jones kept his part of the bargain by taking the World Boxing Organisation light-middleweight title.

"I told them Silky Jones was not good," Hearn said. "I told American promoter Bob Arum that it would be an easy day."

"Jones had lost eight fights and will be a good fight for Phillips while he had nothing else to do before his mandatory defence. We wouldn't have got Phillips here if we had told them the truth. We knew Jones would box his ears off."

After his victory on a split decision, Jones, 29, must take over Phillips's commitments to

fight the popular American Bronco McKart in a mandatory defence. It looks as if the Sheffield fighter will have no time to cash in with an easier first bout as champion.

Jones pulled himself up from a first-round knock-down and had a point deducted for a head butt in the ninth, but still took the verdict by scores of 116-111, 114-113 and 113-113, after dominating the second half of the bout as the champion tired visibly.

Sohail taken to hospital after bouncer

CRICKET

Aamir Sohail, the Pakistan batsman, was taken to hospital yesterday after being struck in the face by a bouncer from his team-mate Waqar Younis during a practice session in Melbourne.

Sohail will miss the tourists' four-day match against Victoria, starting today, after having stitches inserted in the wound.

The Pakistan captain, Wasim Akram, said the opener, who was not wearing a helmet during the net practice at the MCG, should be fit to play in the third and final Test against Australia in Sydney next Thursday.

After avoiding one bouncer, Sohail failed to connect with an attempted hook when Waqar sent down another short-pitched delivery the next ball. Four West Indies players whose behaviour was considered "unsatisfactory" during the tour of England last summer have appeared before a disciplinary hearing in Bridgetown. The West Indies Cricket Board of Control is yet to name the players, but the Caribbean News Agency, CANA, claimed Brian Lara, Carl Hooper, Curtly Ambrose and Kenny Benjamin met the disciplinary committee.

Leeds put Eyres up for sale

Rugby League

Leeds, who have denied making a cash-plus-players offer to the Bradford Bulls for Paul Newlove, have put their international forward, Richie Eyres, on the transfer list, writes Dave Hadfield.

Eyres, who played for Wales in the World Cup, has been made available at £95,000, because of what the club described as "personal reasons".

But Leeds have emphatically denied offering three players in their side to play Bradford on Sunday - Harvey Howard, Francis Cummins and Graham

Holroyd - to the Bulls in part-exchange for Newlove.

The Leeds hooker, Mick Shaw, has agreed a new three-year contract. The 20-year-old has played in nine of Leeds' 13 first-team matches this season. The Wigan loose forward, Andy Farrell, is to put off a hernia operation to play in the Regal Trophy tie at Huddersfield on Sunday. He will only have the operation if he suffers a reaction.

St Helens will be without Vili Matautia and Andy Northey at Hull. The players, sent off for high tackles at Bradford last week, were suspended for three matches and one match respectively.

BBC pots major championships

Snooker

The World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association yesterday announced a five-year deal with the BBC, believed to be worth around £17.5m, for the rights to cover four major events - the Embassy World Championship, the Royal Liver Assurance UK Championship, the Benson and Hedges Masters and the Grand Prix.

The WPSBA were keen that the game should be available to the majority of television viewers and not confined to those who pay

for a satellite channel. TV made no bid and a Sky spokesman said that although they were involved in talks, no firm offer was made.

Jonathan Martin, head of BBC Sport, said: "We are delighted to maintain our long and successful relationship with a sport which continues to hold such a wide appeal, particularly in the world of top sporting events." The BBC's coverage of the Royal Liver Assurance UK Championship at Preston begins tomorrow.

SPORTING DIGEST

Athletics

INTERNATIONAL CHINA EXHIBITION RACE (Beijing, 24 Nov): 100m: 11.8s (China); 200m: 24.2s (China); 400m: 52.4s (China); 800m: 2:02.1s (China); 1,600m: 5:20.1s (China); 3,200m: 11:15.1s (China); 6,400m: 22:44.1s (China); 12,800m: 45:15.1s (China); 25,600m: 1:31:15.1s (China); 51,200m: 2:58:15.1s (China); 102,400m: 5:58:15.1s (China); 204,800m: 11:58:15.1s (China); 409,600m: 23:58:15.1s (China); 819,200m: 47:58:15.1s (China); 1,638,400m: 95:58:15.1s (China); 3,276,800m: 191:58:15.1s (China); 6,553,600m: 383:58:15.1s (China); 13,107,200m: 767:58:15.1s (China); 26,214,400m: 1535:58:15.1s (China); 52,428,800m: 3071:58:15.1s (China); 104,857,600m: 6143:58:15.1s (China); 209,715,200m: 12287:58:15.1s (China); 419,430,400m: 24574:58:15.1s (China); 838,860,800m: 49148:58:15.1s (China); 1,677,721,600m: 98296:58:15.1s (China); 3,355,443,200m: 196592:58:15.1s (China); 6,710,886,400m: 393184:58:15.1s (China); 13,421,772,800m: 786368:58:15.1s (China); 26,843,545,600m: 1572736:58:15.1s (China); 53,687,091,200m: 3145472:58:15.1s (China); 107,374,182,400m: 6290944:58:15.1s (China); 214,748,364,800m: 12581888:58:15.1s (China); 429,496,729,600m: 25163776:58:15.1s (China); 858,993,459,200m: 50327552:58:15.1s (China); 1,717,986,918,400m: 100655104:58:15.1s (China); 3,435,973,836,800m: 201310208:58:15.1s (China); 6,871,947,673,600m: 402620416:58:15.1s (China); 13,743,895,347,200m: 805240832:58:15.1s (China); 27,487,790,694,400m: 1610481664:58:15.1s (China); 54,975,581,388,800m: 3220963328:58:15.1s (China); 109,951,162,777,600m: 6441926656:58:15.1s (China); 219,902,325,555,200m: 12883853312:58:15.1s (China); 439,804,651,110,400m: 25767706624:58:15.1s (China); 879,609,302,220,800m: 51535413248:58:15.1s (China); 1,759,218,604,441,600m: 103070826496:58:15.1s (China); 3,518,437,208,883,200m: 206141652992:58:15.1s (China); 7,036,874,417,766,400m: 412283305984:58:15.1s (China); 14,073,748,835,532,800m: 824566611968:58:15.1s (China); 28,147,497,671,065,600m: 1649133223936:58:15.1s (China); 56,294,995,342,131,200m: 3298266447872:58:15.1s (China); 112,589,990,684,262,400m: 6596532895744:58:15.1s (China); 225,179,981,368,524,800m: 13193065791488:58:15.1s (China); 450,359,962,737,049,600m: 26386131582976:58:15.1s (China); 900,719,925,474,099,200m: 52772263165952:58:15.1s (China); 1,801,439,850,948,198,400m: 105544526331904:58:15.1s (China); 3,602,879,701,896,396,800m: 211089052663808:58:15.1s (China); 7,205,759,403,792,793,600m: 422178105327616:58:15.1s (China); 14,411,518,807,585,587,200m: 844356210655232:58:15.1s (China); 28,823,037,615,171,174,400m: 1688712421310464:58:15.1s (China); 57,646,075,230,342,348,800m: 3377424842620928:58:15.1s (China); 115,292,150,460,684,687,600m: 6754849685241856:58:15.1s (China); 230,584,301,321,369,375,200m: 13509699370483712:58:15.1s (China); 461,168,602,642,738,750,400m: 27019398740967424:58:15.1s (China); 922,337,205,285,477,500,800m: 54038797481934848:58:15.1s (China); 1,844,674,410,954,955,001,600m: 108077594963869696:58:15.1s (China); 3,689,348,821,909,910,003,200m: 216155189927739392:58:15.1s (China); 7,378,697,643,819,820,006,400m: 432310379855478784:58:15.1s (China); 14,757,395,287,639,640,012,800m: 864620759710957568:58:15.1s (China); 29,514,790,575,279,280,025,600m: 1729241519421915136:58:15.1s (China); 59,029,581,150,558,560,051,200m: 3458483038843830272:58:15.1s (China); 118,059,162,301,117,116,102,400m: 6916966077687660544:58:15.1s (China); 236,118,324,602,234,232,204,800m: 13833932155375321088:58:15.1s (China); 472,236,649,204,468,464,409,600m: 27667864310750642176:58:15.1s (China); 944,473,298,408,936,928,819,200m: 55335728621501284352:58:15.1s (China); 1,888,946,596,817,873,857,638,400m: 110671457243002568704:58:15.1s (China); 3,777,893,193,635,747,715,276,800m: 221342914486005137408:58:15.1s (China); 7,555,786,387,271,495,430,553,600m: 442685828972010274816:58:15.1s (China); 15,111,572,774,542,990,901,107,200m: 885371657944020549632:58:15.1s (China); 30,223,145,549,085,981,802,214,400m: 1770743315888041099264:58:15.1s (China); 60,446,291,098,171,963,604,428,800m: 3541486631776082198528:58:15.1s (China); 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990,352,065,351,809,451,662,257,459,200m: 58023716975019330740684416:58:15.1s (China); 1,980,704,130,703,618,903,324,514,918,400m: 116047433950038661481368832:58:15.1s (China); 3,961,408,261,407,237,817,648,029,836,800m: 232094867900077322962737664:58:15.1s (China); 7,922,816,522,814,475,635,296,059,673,600m: 464189735800154645925475328:58:15.1s (China); 15,845,633,045,628,951,270,592,119,347,200m: 928379471600309291850950656:58:15.1s (

SPORT

LONDON BRONCOS

Bucking the trend Page 30



RANGERS

Stiffed by domestic ambition Page 31

Rovers' fall may cost England dear

GLENN MOORE
Football Correspondent

Blackburn Rovers' misadventure in Europe this season was depressing enough before Wednesday night's extraordinary brawl between two of their players, but it now threatens the number of places allocated to English clubs in European competition.

The club itself predictably closed ranks yesterday following the incident which saw fists fly between two England internationals, Graeme Le Saux and David Batty, just four minutes into the

Champions' League game with Spartak Moscow. The fighting came after the two had dattered into one another near the touchline and then traded insults.

The only statement forthcoming from the club, which returned from Moscow yesterday, was a short statement from the chairman, Robert Coar. "The club is disappointed with the incident. Ray Harford will sit down with the players tomorrow. If disciplinary action is deemed necessary it will be carried out internally," he said.

The Football Association, by way of contrast, reacted with remarkable speed and has already written to European football's governing body, Uefa, expressing concern and asking it to take action. The consequence may be the loss of a Uefa Cup representative next year.

England was one of three countries given an extra place this season because of its fair play record. Uefa, which do not accept video evidence, are awaiting the reports from the referee and match observer. Should they take no action, the FA may charge Le Saux and Batty with bringing the game into disrepute.

At present it insists the match falls under Uefa's jurisdiction. Whatever penalty Rovers impose - fining them two weeks wages would appear the minimum - it is not an internal matter. It could be argued that Rovers have been bringing the reputation of English football into disrepute ever since they embarked upon their Champions' League campaign. However, nothing, not even the woeful displays in East Lancashire, Norway and Poland, had prepared us for Wednesday night's madness in Moscow.

That the English champions would then end the match thoroughly beaten and reduced to 10 men, merely heaped humiliation upon the shame. They were lucky to finish with 10. Players have been sent off for punching team-mates.

Oleg Romanov, the manager of Spartak Moscow, summed up most people's reaction when he said: "It was most unexpected. This is the first time I have seen people settling scores on the field with a fist fight." Harford, the Rovers manager, was less forthcoming but he admitted: "I have never seen anything like it from players of mine. They will be dealt with within the club."

Bradford win wages battle

Bradford City have won their fight to stop paying goalkeeper Paul Tomlinson's wages. The Second Division side had been paying Tomlinson £650 a week for the past five months since he refused a contract, but the Football League's appeals committee decided yesterday that he will not be paid after the end of the month. Bradford, however, can still demand a transfer fee for Tomlinson if he finds a new club.

Chris Kamara, Bradford's assistant manager, said: "It's a victory for football that someone should not be allowed to stay at home and get paid. Freedom of contract is not designed for people who want to sit on their backsides. It's supposed to help those who want to play."

Mel Machia, the Bournemouth manager, has been censured by the Football Association after being found guilty of bringing the game into disrepute. He was charged, along with assistant manager John Williams, following remarks made to referee Barry Knight during the match against Crewe on 16 September.

The Queen's Park Rangers midfielder Simon Osborn is to have talks about his future with Ray Wilkins only five months after his £850,000 move from Reading. Osborn is unhappy about not being able to secure first-team football and is threatening to leave the club.

An inquiry into a complaint by the England coach, Terry Venables, that a group of people were orchestrating a smear campaign against him has been terminated by detectives, who have not brought any charges.

Tommy Taylor, the Cambridge manager, has banned his players from night-clubs after midfielder Russell Stock was put out of the game for at least two weeks with a fractured eye socket following an incident during a night out.

The FA and the Football and Premier Leagues are to call a summit to settle their differences following their recent spat over television rights. The FA chief executive, Graham Kelly, has written to his League counterparts, asking for a meeting to discuss the way forward. "The needs of the game and the unity of the game demand this," Kelly said.

Spain's Union Deportivo Salamanca are preparing to make a £2.6m bid for Brazil's World Cup striker Romario. He is understood to be unhappy at Flamengo, who have struggled in the Brazilian league this year.



Graham Thorpe on his way to an unbeaten 131 against Orange Free State in Bloemfontein yesterday

Photograph: Graham Chadwick/Allsport

Stewart and Thorpe hit their stride

Cricket

MARTIN JOHNSON
reports from Bloemfontein
England 316-4 dec
Orange Free State 36-0

All those years of sporting isolation have clearly left South Africa in urgent need of re-educating their cricketing public, and the electronic scoreboard here subtly led yesterday's spectators through some of the more complex intricacies of the game.

commodating than this one, nor an attack for whom the description undemanding would sail dangerously close to flattery. The home team have recently changed their name from Orange Free State to Goodyear Free State, which will doubtless lead to Roses matches between Kellogg's Yorkshire and Tesco Lancashire when our own marketing men cotton on to the possibilities.

Yesterday, though, without Allan Donald and Franklyn Stephenson, the Goodyear team were operating on a set of bald tyres. On the other hand, England did well to give the pre-Test trial their full attention in an almost total lack of atmosphere. Here in the heart of Afrikaaner country - where anyone trying to change the name of the ground from Springbok Park to Protea Pastures will get very short shrift - rugby is the major game, and 31 years without a visit from the England cricket team has not brought Bloemfontein to the brink of fever pitch.

The unluckiest batsman yesterday was the captain, Michael Atherton, who was caught in the gully without scoring, fending off a nasty lifter from Nico Pretorius. Thereafter, the only risk involved in facing Pretorius was in getting over-excited.

Mark Ramprakash was England's other failure, chopping a wide delivery on to his stumps after scratching out 15 runs in 20 overs, and his place in next week's second Test match remains very much under threat. It might have been even more so had Atherton not declared when John Crawley was going well towards the end of the day.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 2848, Friday 24 November By Phil

Thursday's Solution

CONTAMINATED
O E O N N R N
E E R I N G A E R A T E D
V A S E P A R T
S A T I A T I O N T E N D E R
F U L L I N G A O
I M P L Y I N S P E C T O R
O S C I
G O D F A T H E R M A I N E
A R D O A B N
M E A N D E R R O V E R I N
E I R I H C B
S O N N E T S E G O T I S T
E S E A N A E
P R E S C R I P T I O N

ACROSS

1 Visionary puzzle creator losing heart (4)
3 Fish in stripes - a common sight in supermarkets (8)
10 Rouse a tanner to make a small circle (4,2,1,8)
11 Line that doesn't quite connect? Dodgy poets may include it (9)
12 Operatic song forming second half of hymn to the Virgin? (4)
13 Ruler exercises right in centre of early civilisation, on reflection (7)
15 One daughter, brought in under restraint, put things away neatly (6)
17 Puts repeated heavy pressure on currency (6)
19 Mild foreplay loose woman's left out - about time! (7)

20 Horse gives cry of discomfort when decapitated (4)
21 Think beer cart crashed - end of ale! (9)
24 Call a halt or gap, possibly - happy to lose core science? (1)
25 Stand payment endlessly? Certainly, having source of great wealth (8)
26 Hint from line in what previous actor said? (4)

DOWN

1 Tense uprising in side awkwardly placed (8)
2 Affected by nobleman in ancient history (5)
4 A fruit not yielding up its pith as nutritional food (7)
5 Traditional opponents work on beach, right, surrounded by Aussies (4,3,7)
6 Has dinner on Sunday.

7 The girl would disrobe? (4)
8 Part one's coming to reinterpret, sharing experiences (9,5)
9 "See! British for us!" according to political party (6)
14 Early model - professional kid, heading off exaggerated claims (9)
16 Electronic communicator? Still picking up pen, mostly to circumvent hindrance (8)
18 Various clues are curtailed, being unsuitable for the church (7)
19 Overlooked attempt to invade castle (6)
22 Horrify a Nordic type in uprising (5)
23 What'll make second mog.

Setback for Moore as Mitchell earns England call-up

Rugby Union

Brian Moore suffered a setback in his campaign to regain his England place yesterday when his Harlequins club-mate Simon Mitchell, who rotates the hooking duties with Moore, was drafted into an expanded squad.

Moore was dropped from the squad for last Saturday's Test against South Africa after winning 64 caps. Mitchell is one of nine players added to the Twickenham squad for training at Marlow next Tuesday in the build-up to the Test against Western Samoa on 16 December.

Paul Hull, the full-back England rejected at the start of the year, is recalled. Also back in the squad are Tim Simpson, the West Hartlepool full-back, Wasps' backs Nick Greenstock and Andy Gomarsall, Leicester prop Darren Garforth and back row forwards Rory Jenkins (Harlequins) and Tony Diprose

(Saracens). Called into the official squad for the first time, along with Mitchell, is the Orrell wing Jim Naylor. Simon Shaw, the Bristol lock, would have been included but for his horrific leg injury on Wednesday. It is likely that Sale's John Fowler will come in instead to reinforce the lock strength.

Shaw will miss the rest of the season after suffering career-threatening leg and ankle injuries during Bristol's 26-12 defeat by

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